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SERMONS

UPON

DIVINE GRACE

AND

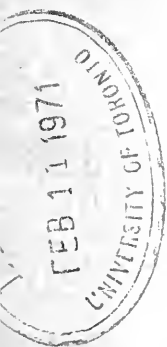
HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY.

BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

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The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 11, 1856, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."—2 Timothy i. 13.

My incessant anxiety for you, dearly beloved in the faith of Jesus Christ, is that I may be able, in the first place, to teach you what God's truth is; and then, trusting that I have to the best of my ability taught you what I believe to be God's most holy gospel, my next anxiety is, that you should "hold fast the form of sound words;" that whatever may occur in the future, should death snatch away your pastor, or should anything occur which might put you in perilous circumstances, so that you were tempted to embrace any system of heresy, you might every one of you stand as firm and as unmoved as rocks, and as strong as mountains be, abiding in "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," whereof ye have heard, and which we have proclaimed unto you. If the gospel be worth your hearing, and if it be a true gospel, it is worth your holding, and our anxiety is, that you should be so established in the faith, that you may, "hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering, for he is faithful that has promised."

The Apostle most earnestly admonished Timothy to "hold fast the form of sound words which he had heard of him in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." I do not suppose that by this it is intended that Paul ever wrote out for Timothy a list of doctrines; or that he gave him a small abstract of divinity, to which he desired him to subscribe his name, as the articles of the church over which he was made a pastor. If so, doubtless that document would have been preserved and enrolled in the canons of Scripture as one of the writings of an inspired man. I can scarce think such a creed would have been lost, whilst other creeds have been preserved and handed down to us. I conceive that what the Apostle meant was this:—"Timothy, when I have preached to you, you have heard certain grand outlines of truth; you have heard from me the great system of faith in Jesus Christ; in my writings and public speakings you have heard me continually insist upon a certain pattern or form of faith; now I bid you, my dearly beloved son in the gospel, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

This morning I shall first attempt to tell you what I conceive to be a "*form of sound words*," which we are to hold fast. In the second place, I shall endeavour to urge upon you the strong necessity of holding fast that form. In the third place, I shall warn you of some dangers to which you will be exposed, tempting you to give up the form of sound words. Then, in the last place I shall mention the two great holdfasts, faith and love in Christ Jesus, which are the great means of "holding fast the form of sound words."

1. What is a "FORM OF SOUND WORDS?" Ten thousand persons will quarrel upon this. One will say, "My creed is a form of sound words;" another will declare that his creed also is sound, if not infallible. We will not, therefore, enter into all the minutæ which distinguish creeds from each other, but just simply say, that no system can be a form of sound words unless it is perfectly scriptural. We receive no doctrines as the doctrines of men; whatever authority come to us which is not the authority of the Holy Spirit, and inspired by God, is no authority at all to us.

We laugh to scorn all the dogmatism of men; we care for nothing they assert, however strongly they declare it, or however eloquently they plead for it; we utterly reject and discard it; we hold it a sin to "take for doctrines the commandments of men;" we give no heed to the traditions that are handed down to us. If our opponent cannot quote text or verse for anything he advances, we hold no argument with him. Scripture is the only weapon we can acknowledge.

But since it is said that texts may be found to prove almost everything, we must remark, that a form of sound words must be *one that exalts God and puts down man*. We dare not for a moment think that any doctrine is sound that does not put the crown upon the head of Jesus, and does not exalt the Almighty. If we see a doctrine which exalts the creature, we do not care one fig about what arguments may be brought to support it; we know that it is a lie, unless it lays the creature in the very dust of abasement, and exalts the Creator. If it does not do this, it is nothing but a rotten doctrine of pride; it may dazzle us with the brilliant malaria rising from its marshes, but it never can shed a true and healthful light into the soul; it is a rotten doctrine, not fit to be builded on the gospel, unless it exalts Jehovah Jesus, Jehovah the Father, and Jehovah the Holy Spirit.

We think, also, that we may judge of the soundness of doctrine *by its tendency*. We can never think a doctrine sound, when we see plainly upon its very surface that it has a tendency to create sin in men. Unless it be a doctrine according to godliness, we cannot conceive it to be a doctrine of God. Unless the believer of it, earnestly and truthfully believing it, doth give himself to virtue—unless that doctrine has in itself a natural tendency to promote in him a love to the right—we are at first sight suspicious of it; and if we find on examination that it is a licentious doctrine—it may have all the glitter and the glare of novelty, but we cast it away as not being the doctrine of Christianity, because it does not promote holiness in the soul.

We shall, perhaps, be asked what we *do* regard as a form of sound words, and what those doctrines are which are scriptural, which at the same time are healthful to the spirit and exalting to God. We answer, we believe a form of sound words must embrace, first of all, the doctrine of *God's being and nature*, we must have the Trinity in Unity, and the Unity in Trinity. Any doctrine, which hath not the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as equal persons in one undivided essence, we cast aside as being unsound, for we are sure that such doctrines must be derogatory to God's glory; and if they be so it is enough for us. If any man despise either Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, we despise him, and despise his teachings, and cannot even say to him, "I wish you God speed."

Now, we hold, that a form of sound words must *look upon man aright as well as upon God aright*; it must teach that man is utterly fallen, that he is sinful, and for his sin condemned, and in himself altogether hopeless of salvation. If it exalts man by giving him a character which is not a true one, and clothing him with a spurious robe of righteousness, woven by his own fingers, we reject and discard it utterly.

And next, we think that a doctrine that is sound *must have right views of salvation, as being of the Lord alone*; unless we find in it everlasting, unchanging love, working out a salvation for a people "who were not a people," but were made a people by special grace; unless we find discriminating love, others may say what they will—we cannot consider such a creed to be a form of sound words, unless we discern redeeming mercy openly and boldly taught; unless we see final perseverance, and all those great and glorious truths which are the very bulwarks of our religion, others may embrace the doctrine as being a form of sound words; but we cannot, and we dare not. We love the old system of our forefathers; we love the old truths of Scripture, not because they are old, but because we cannot consider anything to be truth which doth not hold the scriptural view of salvation. Methinks Paul himself, in this very chapter, gives us a form of sound words, where he speaks of "God who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

I need not stop this morning to prove to you that which I have briefly hinted at as a form of sound words, because you believe it, and believe it firmly. I am not about to urge you to receive it, because I know you have already received it; but what I have to say is, "Hold fast," I beseech you, "the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

II. Now let me show you THE NECESSITY OF HOLDING FAST THIS FORM OF SOUND WORDS, AND KEEPING IT FOR YOUR OWN SAKE, FOR THE CHURCH'S SAKE, FOR THE WORLD'S SAKE.

First, *for your own sake*, hold it fast, for thereby you will receive ten thousand blessings; you will receive the blessing of peace in your conscience. I protest, before God, that if at any time I ever doubt one of the great things I receive from God, instantly there comes an aching void which the world can never fill, and which I can never get filled until I receive that doctrine again, and believe it with all my heart. When at any time I am cast down and dejected, I always find comfort in reading books which are strong on the doctrines of the faith of the gospel; if I turn to some of them that treat of God's eternal love, revealed to his chosen people in the person of Christ; and if I remember some of the exceeding great and precious promises made to the elect in their covenant head, my faith at once becomes strong, and my soul, with wings sublime, mounts upwards towards its God. You cannot tell, beloved, if you have never tasted, how sweet is the peace which the doctrines of grace will give to the soul; there is nothing like them. They are—

“A sovereign balm for every wound,
A cordial for our fears.”

They are God's sweet lullaby, wherewith he singeth his children to sleep, even in storms. They are God's sheet anchors, which are cast out into the sea, to hold our little vessels fast in the midst of tempests. There is a “peace of God which passeth all understanding,” which accrues to a man who is a strong believer, but you know the tendency of the day is to give up old land marks and to adopt new ones, and to avow anything rather than the old-fashioned divinity. Well, my dear friends, if any of you like to try new doctrines, I warn you, that if you be the children of God you will soon be sick enough of those new-fangled notions, those newly invented doctrines, which are continually taught. You may, for the first week, be pleased enough with their novelty; you may wonder at their transcendental spirituality, or something else, which entices you on; but you will not have lived on them long, before you will say, “Alas! alas! I have taken in my hands the apples of Sodom; they were fair to look upon, but they are ashes in my mouth.” If you would be peaceful, keep fast to the truth, hold fast the form of sound words: so shall “your peace be like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.”

“Hold fast the form of sound words,” again, let me say, *because it will tend very much to your growth*. He who holds fast the truth will grow faster than he who is continually shifting from doctrine to doctrine. What a mighty number of spiritual weathercocks we have in this world now. We have men who in the morning hear a Calvinistic preacher, and say, “Oh, it is delightful;” in the evening they hear an Arminian, and they say, “Oh, it is just as good; and no doubt they are both true, though one contradicts the other!” The glorious charity of the present day is such, that it believes lies to be as good as truth; and lies and truth have met together and kissed each other; and he that telleth truth is called a bigot, and truth has ceased to be honourable in the world! Ah! beloved, we know better than to profess such unlimited, but false charity; the truth is, we know how to “hold fast the form of sound words,” which has been given to us, because in this way we grow. Changeable people cannot grow much. If you have a tree in your garden and plant it in one place to-day, and to-morrow place it somewhere else, how much bigger will it be in six months? It will be dead very likely; or if it does not die, it will not be very much grown; it will be marvellously stunted. So it is with some of you: you plant yourselves there; then you are persuaded that you are not quite right, and you go and plant yourself somewhere else. Why, there are men who are anythingarians; who go dodging about from one denomination to another, and cannot tell what they are; our opinion is, of these people, that they believe nothing, and are good for nothing, and anybody may have them that likes; we do not consider men to be worth much, unless they have settled principles, and “hold fast the form of sound words.” You cannot grow unless you hold it fast. How should I know any more of my faith in ten years' time, if I allowed it to take ten forms in ten years? I should be but a smatterer in each, and know nothing thoroughly of one. But he that hath one faith, and knoweth it to be the faith of God, and holdeth it

fast, how strong he becomes in his faith? Each wind or tempest doth but confirm him, as the fierce winds root the oaks, and make them strong, standing firmly in their places; but if I shift and change, I am none the better, but rather the worse. For your own peace sake then, and for your growth, "hold fast the form of sound words."

But, my beloved, I would beseech you to hold it fast for your own sakes, *from a remembrance of the great evils which will follow the contrary course.* If you do not "hold fast the form of sound words," listen to me while I tell you what you will do.

In the first place, *every deviation from truth is a sin.* It is not simply a sin for me to do a wrong act, but it is a sin for me to believe a wrong doctrine. Lately our ministers have absolved us all from obeying God in our judgments; they have told us point blank, many of them, in their drawing-rooms, and some of them in the pulpit, that we shall never be asked in the day of judgment what we believed. We have been told that for our acts we shall be responsible, but for our faith we shall be irresponsible, or something very much like it; they have told us plainly, that the God who made us, although he has authority over our hands, our feet, our eyes and our lips, hath but little authority over our judgments; they have told us, that if we make ever such blunders in divinity, they are no sins, so long as we can live right lives. But is that true? No; the whole man is bound to serve God; and if God gives me a judgment, I am bound to employ that judgment in his service; and if that judgment receive an untruth, it has received stolen goods, and I have sinned as much as if I put forth my hand to take my neighbour's goods. There may be degrees in the sin. If it be a sin of ignorance, it is nevertheless a sin; but it is not so heinous as a sin of negligence, which I fear it is with many. I tell you, beloved, if, for instance, baptism be not by immersion, I commit a sin every time I practise it; and if it be, my brother commits a sin who does not practise it. If Election be true, I am committing a sin if I do not believe it; and if Final Perseverance be true, I am committing a sin before Almighty God, if I do not receive it; and if it be not true, then I sin in embracing what is not scriptural. Error in doctrine is as much a sin as error in practice. In everything we are bound to serve our God with all our might, exercising those powers of judging and believing which he has given unto us; and I warn you, Christians, not to think it is a little thing to hold faith with a feeble hand: it is a sin every time you do aught which makes you waver in the faith of Jesus Christ. Remember, too, that error in doctrine is not only a sin, but a sin which has a great tendency to increase. When a man once in his life believes a wrong thing, it is marvellous how quickly he believes another wrong thing. Once open the door to a false doctrine—Satan says it is but a little one—ay, but he only puts the little one in like the small end of the wedge, and he means to drive in a larger one; and he will say it is only a little more, and a little more, and a little more. The most damnable heretics who ever perverted the faith of God erred by littles and littles; those who have gone the widest from truth have only gone so by degrees. Whence came the Church of Rome, that mass of abominations? Why, from gradual departures. It did not become abominable at first; it was not the "mother of harlots" all at once; but it first did deck itself in some ornaments, then in others, and by-and-bye it went on to commit its fornications with the kings of the earth. It fell by little and little; and in the same way it separated itself from the truth. For centuries it was a Church of Christ, and it is difficult to say, in looking at history, when was the exact point in which it ceased to be numbered with Christian Churches. Take care, Christians, if you commit one error, you cannot tell how many more you will commit.

"Hold fast the form of sound words," *because error in doctrine almost inevitably leads to error in practice.* When a man believes wrongly, he will soon act wrongly. Faith has a great influence on our conduct. As a man's faith, so is he. If you begin to imbibe erroneous doctrines, they soon have an effect on your practice. Keep fast to the bulwarks of your fathers' faith. If you do not, the enemy will make sad havoc with you. "Hold fast the form of sound words which was delivered unto you."

2. And now, *for the good of the Church itself,* I want you all to "hold fast the form of sound words." Would you wish to see the Church prosperous? Would you wish to see it peaceful? Then "hold fast the form of sound words." What is the cause of divisions, schisms, quarrels, and bickerings amongst us? It is not the fault of the truth; it is the fault of the errors. There would have been peace in the Church,

entire and perpetual peace, if there had been purity—entire and perpetual purity—in the Church. Going down to Sheerness on Friday, I was told by some one on board that during the late gale several of the ships there had their anchors rent up, and had gone dashing against the other ships, and had done considerable damage. Now, if their anchors had held fast and firm, no damage would have been done. Ask me the cause of the damage which has been done to our churches by the different denominations, and I tell you, it is because all their anchors did not hold fast. If they had held fast by the truth, there would have been no disputing; disputing comes from errors. If there be any ill feeling, you must not trace it to the truth—you must trace it to the error. If the Church had always kept firm to the faith, and had always been united to the great doctrines of the truth, there would have been no disputes. Keep firm to your belief, and you will prevent discord in the Church.

Keep to your faith, I say again, for the Church's sake, *for so you will promote strength in the Church.* I saw lying between Chatham and Sheerness a number of ships that I supposed to be old hulks; and I thought how stupid Government was to let them remain there, and not chop them up for firewood, or something else; but some one said to me, those ships can soon be fitted for service; they look old now, but they only want a little paint, and when the Admiralty requires them, they will be commissioned and made fit for use. So we have heard some people say, "There are those old doctrines—what good are they?" Wait; there is not a doctrine in God's Bible that has not its use. Those ships that you may think are not wanted, will be useful by-and-bye. So it is with the doctrines of the Bible. Do not say, "Break up those old doctrines, you can do without them." Nay, we want them, and we must have them. Some people say, "Why do you preach against Arminians? we have not much to fear from them now." But I like to practice my men against the time comes for action. We are not going to burn our ships; they will be wanted by-and-bye, and when we sail out of harbour, the men will say, "Whence came these old ships?" "Why," we will reply, "they are just the doctrines you thought good for nothing; now we bring them out, and we will make good use of them." Now-a-days we are having new and marvellous hymn-books, full of perfect nonsense; and we are having new theories, and new systems; and they say, "Why be so stringent? our Christian brethren may believe what they like on those points just now;" but as certain as there is a church in this land, they will want our old ships to fight their battles; they may do very well in times of peace, but they will not do in the time of war. They will then need our broadside to support the faith of the gospel, though now they laugh at us. For the strength of the church, my brethren, I bid you "hold fast the form of sound words."

"Well," says one, "I think we ought to hold the truth firmly; but I do not see the necessity for holding the *form* of it; I think we might cut and trim a little, and then our doctrines would be received better." Suppose, my friends, we should have some valuable egg, and some one should say, "Well, now, the shell is good for nothing: there will never be a bird produced by the shell certainly, why not break the shell?" I should simply smile in his face and say, "My dear friend, I want the shell to take care of what is inside. I know the vital principle is the most important, but I want the shell to take care of the vital principle." You say, "Hold fast the principle, but do not be so severe about the form. You are an old Puritan, and want to be too strict in religion; let us just alter a few things, and make it a little palatable." My dear friends, do not break the shell; you are doing far more damage than you think. We willingly admit the form is but little; but when men attack the form, what is their object? They do not hate the form; they hate the substance. Keep the substance then, and keep the form too. Not only hold the same doctrines, but hold them in the same shape—just as angular, rough and rugged as they were, for if you do not, it is difficult to change the form and yet to keep fast the substance. "Hold fast the *form* of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Jesus Christ."

3. Again, I say, "hold fast the form of sound words," *for the world's sake.* Pardon me when I say that, speaking after the manner of men, I believe that the progress of the gospel has been awfully impeded by the errors of its preachers. I never wonder when I see a Jew an unbeliever in Christianity, for this reason, that the Jew very seldom sees Christianity in its beauty. For hundreds of years what has the Jew thought Christianity to be? Why, pure idolatry. He has seen the Catholic

bow down to blocks of wood and stone; he has seen him prostrating himself before the Virgin Mary and all saints; and the Jew has said, "Ah! this is my watchword—hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is our Lord; I could not be a Christian, for to worship one God is the essential part of my religion." So the heathen, I believe have seen a false system of Christianity, and they have said, "What! is that your Christianity?" and they did not receive it. But I believe that when the gospel is purged from all the rudiments of men, and all the chaff and dust have been winnowed from it, and it is presented in all its naked simplicity, it will be sure to win the day; and I say again, speaking as a man, the gospel might have made a ten thousand fold greater progress, if it had been preached in all its simplicity, instead of that diluted or rather distorted form in which it is commonly proclaimed. If ye would see sinners saved, if ye would see God's elect gathered in, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

III. And now, very briefly, in the third place, LET ME WARN YOU OF TWO DANGERS.

One is, that you will be very much tempted to give up the form of sound words that you hold, *on account of the opposition you will meet with.* I do not prophesy that you will have corporeal persecution, though I know there are some poor creatures here that have to endure that from ungodly husbands, and such like; but you will all of you, in some measure, if you hold the truth, meet with the persecution of the tongue. You will be laughed at: your doctrine will be held up to ridicule, exhibited in a grotesque manner; you will be caricatured in all that you believe, and you will be sometimes tempted to say, "No I do not believe that," though all the while you do. Or if you do not positively say it, you will at times be led to turn a little, because the laughter you cannot stand, and the scoff of the worldly-wise is rather too hard for you. Oh! my beloved, let me warn you against being thus drawn aside. "Hold fast the form of sound words" in the midst of all ridicule. But the greatest obstacle you will have is a sort of slight and cunning, trying to pervert you to the belief, that your doctrine is the same with one which is just the very opposite. The enemy will try to persuade you that something he holds is quite harmless, though opposed to what you hold; and he will say, "You do not want to be broaching these things, that must bring forth controversy; there is a way of squaring your sentiments with mine." And you know we all like to be thought so liberal! The greatest pride in the world now is to be thought liberal in sentiment; and some of us would run a hundred miles, rather than be called a bigot or an Antinomian. I beseech you, be not drawn aside by those who are so ready to subvert your faith, not by openly attacking it, but by insidiously undermining every doctrine, saying, this does not signify, and that does not signify, while all the while they are trying to pull down every castle and fortress wherewith God has guarded his truth and his Church.

IV. And now, in the last place, I am to tell you of THE GREAT HOLDFASTS, WHEREBY YOU ARE TO HOLD FAST THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL.

If I might be allowed to mention one or two before coming to those in the text, I should say, in the first place, if you want to hold fast the truth, *seek to get an understanding of it.* A man cannot hold a thing fast, unless he has a good understanding of it. I never want you to have the faith of the collier who was asked what he believed; he said he believed what the Church believed. "Well, but what does the Church believe?" He said the Church believed what he believed, and he believed what the Church believed; and so it went all the way round. We do not want you to have that faith. It may be a very pertinacious faith, a very obstinate faith, but it is a very foolish faith. We want you to understand things, to get a true knowledge of them. The reason why men forsake truth for error is, that they have not really understood that truth; in nine cases out of ten they have not embraced it with enlightened minds. Let me exhort you, parents, as much as lieth in you, to give your children sound instruction in the great doctrines of the gospel of Christ. I believe that what Irving once said is a great truth. He said, "In these modern times you boast and glory, and you think yourselves to be in a high and noble condition, because you have your Sabbath-schools and British-schools, and all kinds of schools for teaching youth. I tell you," he said, "that philanthropic and great as these are, they are the ensigns of your disgrace; they show that your land is not a land where parents teach their children at home. They show you there is a want of parental

instruction; and though they be blessed things, these Sabbath-schools, they are indications of something wrong, for if we all taught our children there would be no need of strangers to say to our children 'Know the Lord.'"

I trust you will never give up that excellent puritanical habit of catechising your children at home. Any father or mother who entirely gives up a child to the teaching of another has made a mistake. There is no teacher who wishes to absolve a parent from what he ought to do himself. He is an assistant, but he was never intended to be a substitute. Teach your children; bring up your old catechisms again, for they are after all blessed means of instruction, and the next generation shall outstrip those that have gone before it; for the reason why many of you are weak in the faith is this, you did not receive instruction in your youth in the great things of the gospel of Christ. If you had, you would have been so grounded, and settled, and firm in the faith, that nothing could by any means have moved you. I beseech you, then, understand truth, and then you will be more likely to hold fast by it.

But then, Christian men, above all things, if you would hold fast the truth, *pray yourselves right into it*. The way to get a doctrine is to pray till you get it. An old divine says, "I have lost many things I learned in the house of God, but I never lost anything I ever learned in the closet." That which a man learns on his knees, with his Bible open, he will never forget. Well, have you ever bowed your knees, and said, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law?" If you have seen that wondrous thing you will never forget it. He that prays himself into a truth, will never be got out of it by the very devil himself, though he were to put on the garb of an angel of light. Pray yourselves into the truth.

But the two great holdfasts are here given—*faith and love*. If ye would hold the truth fast, put your faith in Jesus Christ, and have an ardent love towards him.

Believe the truth. Do not pretend to believe it, but believe it thoroughly. And he who does believe it, and fixes his faith first in Christ, and then in all Christ says, will not be likely to let it go. Why, we do not believe religion, most of us. We pretend to believe it, but we do not believe it with all our heart and all our soul, with all our might and all our strength—not with that "faith which is in Christ Jesus;" for if we did, come storms, come trials, like Luther of old, we should not flinch because of persecution, but stand fast in the evil day, having our faith fixed upon a rock.

And then the second holdfast is *love*. Love Christ and love Christ's truth because it is Christ's truth, for Christ's sake, and if you love the truth you will not let it go. It is very hard to turn a man away from the truth he loves, "Oh!" says one, "I cannot argue with you about it, but I cannot give it up: I love it, and cannot live without it; it is a part of myself, woven into my very nature; and though my opponent says that bread is not bread, and I cannot prove that it is, yet I know I go and eat it; it is wonderfully like it to me, and it takes away my hunger. He says that stream is not a pure stream; I cannot prove that it is, but I go and drink of it, and find it the river of the water of life to my soul." And he tells me that my gospel is not a true one: well, it comforts me, it sustains me in my trials, it helps me to conquer sin and to keep down my evil passions, and brings me near to God, and if my gospel be not a true one, I wonder what sort of thing a true one is: mine is wonderfully like it, and I cannot suppose that a true gospel would produce better effects. That is the best thing to do, to believe the Word, to have so full a belief in it, that the enemy cannot pull you away. He may try to do it, but you will say,—

"Amidst temptations sharp and long,
My soul to the same refuge flies;
Faith is my anchor, firm and strong,
When tempests blow or billows rise."

Hold on then, Christian, to "faith and love which are by Christ Jesus"—two blessed holdfasts, wherewith we grasp the truth.

And now, brethren and sisters, I pray that my Master will enable you to see the importance of what I have uttered. Perhaps you may not think it so important

now, especially those of you who are young; but there are some here, the fathers of this church, who will tell you that the older they grow and the longer they live, the more they find truth to be valuable. They may perhaps in their youth have had a little radicalism in them with regard to truth, but they are conservative in their views of it now, for they feel it to be worth conserving. It would be well for us if, with regard to the truth, we began to be conservative as soon as we believed it, and held it fast and never let it go. I think the chief fault of the present day is, that in seeking to be liberal we do not hold the truth firmly enough. I met some time ago with the case of an eminent minister in the gospel, a brother whom I respect and esteem, who preached a sermon from the text, "Prove all things." A young man was there who was professedly a believer in Christianity; but such was the style in which the subject was handled, that after hearing that sermon he went home and bought some infidel works, and the consequence is, that he has become entirely apostate even from virtue itself, and has forsaken everything that he once held to be true. I say, send your anchor right down, young Christian, and let whatever may come against you, hold on still by that truth; and you may yet even then "prove all things." But while you are doing it, remember to "hold fast that which is good." Do not "prove all things" by giving up that which is good to do it.

Now such of you as know not the Lord, if you ever are saved, let me tell you that the most likely place for you to meet with salvation is under a pure gospel ministry. Therefore there is a lesson for you. Attend where the gospel is preached.

Again: the most likely way for you ever to receive God's grace is to believe God's truths. Never kick against God's doctrines, but receive them. And I have one thing to say to thee this morning, if in thy heart, poor sinner, thou canst say, "I believe God's gospel to be a glorious gospel," thou art not far from something else. If thou canst say, "I submit to all its demands; I believe God just if he destroys me, and if he saves me, it will be of his sovereign mercy only," then, sinner, there are good hopes of thee; thou hast proceeded some way on the road to heaven. If thou canst but do one thing more, and say, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him," and if thou canst come to the cross of Christ, and say, "Jesus, I love thy gospel and I love thy truth; if I perish, I will perish believing all thy truth, I will perish clasping thy cross; if I die, I will die owning that thou art a just and gracious God, and still in my poor way, holding fast the form of sound words," I tell thee, poor soul, God will never damn thee. If thou dost believe in Jesus Christ, and holdest fast his words, he will look upon thee in love, he will say, "Poor soul! though he does not know that these truths are his, yet he thinks them precious; though he dares not hope that they belong to him, yet he will fight for them; though he does not know that he is really a soldier of the cross, chosen of me ere time began, yet see how valiantly he strives for me;" and the Lord will say, "Poor soul, thou lovest the things that thou thinkest are not thine own—I will make thee rejoice in them as thine own, by my grace; thou lovest election, though thou thinkest thou art not elect—that is an evidence that thou art mine." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized, and thou shalt be saved."

And now, my brethren, stand fast, I beseech you. If my tears, if my bended knees, if my cries, yea, if my blood could prevail with you to lay to heart what I have said this morning, here should be tears, and cries, and blood too—if I could but make you all hold fast in these evil, perilous times. Hold fast, ah! with the tenacity of the dying hand of the sinking mariner—"Hold fast," I beseech you, "the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

The New Park Street Pulpit.

EFFECTS OF SOUND DOCTRINE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, APRIL 22ND, 1860, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."—Matt. xxiv. 24.

I AM not about to enter upon any argument in proof of the doctrine of election to-night. That I have done at other times, and am prepared to do so yet again. I purpose rather to speak of some of the practical effects which result from this article of the believer's faith. We cannot however pass over the text, without observing that it is very certain there is an elect, and that these elect are a special people; for they are here defined as being "the very elect"—those who are such in deed and in truth. It is equally clear that these elect ones cannot be deceived. The text informs us that if it were possible—those deceivers who had gone to the full stretch of great signs and wonders, doubtless adding thereto all kinds of eloquence and persuasion, were not able to deceive the elect; the simple reason being that it was not possible. They would have deceived them if there had been a possibility, but the elect were a people who could not possibly be turned from the stedfastness of their faith and deceived. Moreover, we may add that in the twenty-second verse, these same elect people are spoken of as being those for whose sake the rigour of God's punishments is abated. "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time; no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened." God did not temper the rigour of his dispensations for the sake of all flesh, but for the elect's sake. The piteous wail of manhood moveth not the Almighty to spare his righteous dispensation of punishment upon the nations; it is the cry of the elect that moveth his heart. For their sake he promises to shorten those days, and sheath, as it were, his sword before its time.

We simply make these remarks to show, that in the dealings of God's providence, and surely also in the dealings of his grace, God has a special regard for his chosen and justified ones. For the elect's sake he does many things which otherwise would not enter into the plan of his government. If our Bibles were read by us in the original, we should be exceedingly struck with the prominence which is given to the doctrine of election; and if, my brethren, you were at all acquainted with the manners of the early Christian Church, or had read any of the letters which have been preserved of the first age of Christianity, you would be astonished to find how conspicuously this great doctrine appears; so much so that Christians were accustomed to address each other as *elect* ones. The term far from being recondite was common in daily conversation, and the doctrine far from being kept back—I do not hesitate to say, that

Next to the doctrine of the crucifixion and the resurrection of our most blessed Lord—no doctrine had such prominence in the early Christian Church as the doctrine of the election of grace. The word "*elect*" recurred so frequently in conversation, and was so mixed up with all their preaching, with all their assembling together, and with all their church acts, that it is impossible to conceive that its meaning could be obscured, or held in disesteem. Upon that matter, however, as I said before, it is not my present intention to enlarge. My simple endeavour will be to clear the doctrine of sundry aspersions which have been cast upon it, by showing its proper practical influence—an influence which I hope as a church, we do not merely show in words by the lips of our minister, but in our daily life and conversation as a people.

It has often been objected to those that hold the doctrine of election, that it restricts ministers from earnestly preaching to sinners. Now, we are compelled to confess with the greatest sorrow, and I may add also with no little indignation, that there have been some men who have never been able to grasp the gospel in its integrity, and present the grace of God to men's minds at once in its sovereignty and in its freeness. Though their sermons sometimes ring with the clear melodious note of grace, they are too often bent on qualifying the extent of its welcome, and inventing explanations of their own, to wrest the simple meaning of Scriptures. Calvinists, such men may call themselves, but, unlike the Reformer, whose name they adopt, they bring a system of divinity to the Bible to interpret it, instead of making every system, be its merits what they may, yield, and give place to the pure and unadulterated Word of God. They will not imitate their Master in inviting all men to Christ—they dare not preach a full Christ to empty sinners—they are ashamed to say, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the water;" they have been obliged to cover up such a passage as this, because they could not understand it:—"Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, but ye would not." They durst not preach upon such a text as this:—"As I live saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." They are ashamed to say to men, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die." They dare not come out and preach as Peter did—"Repent ye, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out." This, they say, would be to deny the doctrine of election at once. But, beloved, we have not so learned Christ. I trust we have learned to prove practically by our ministry, that it is possible to have all the bowels of compassion which a man can feel for dying souls, and yet grasp with a firm hand, the standard of the doctrine of grace. It has been our aim and object—at least I can speak for myself—it has been my aim and object in my ministry, to show that while I believe the Lord knoweth them that are his, it is at the same time, written over the fountain of living waters, "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely."

Sometimes also has it been said, that the doctrine of election leads naturally to carelessness, and to hard-heartedness in sin—that it acts as a bugbear to frighten penitents, and as a drug which sinks the impenitent into deeper sleep. Here again, I must confess, for it is but the duty of candour to acknowledge it, that the preaching of some men has had this tendency, this doctrine has been used too frequently for the destruction of men's souls. But what argument is this against its truth. What truth has not been perverted? Are there not on the other hand, those who teach God's universal mercy, and has not that damned men's souls? You may teach, and teach rightly too, that God is long-suffering, and that at the eleventh hour he still invites a sinner to himself; but has not that very fact of God's long-suffering helped to lull sinners to sleep, and weaken the power of that tremendous word, "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." There is no passage of Scripture which may not be the means of a man's destruction, if he wills to make it so. From the very pinnacle of the temple ye may cast yourselves down, saying at the moment you commit suicide, "He hath given his angels charge over me, to keep me in all my ways." If ye will be foolish enough to destroy yourselves at the foot of the cross, ye may do it. There are many ways to hell, and when a man would commit self-murder on his soul, he need be at no loss to distil from the most wholesome truths in Scriptures poison to his spirit. I say therefore it proves nothing whatever against the doctrine that men have so perverted it.

This doctrine has likewise often been charged with a tendency to cut off the sympathies of Christian men from their fellows. "Surely," saith one, "if you believe yourself to be an elect one, and if I cannot receive the doctrine, but, nevertheless, put my humble trust in Christ, there is a tendency in the doctrine to mak-

you exclusive, and separate yourself from all the rest of men." And I must again make confession; too many hold the doctrines of grace in bitterness. An old Puritan at St. Paul's Cross, complained of a set of ministers that were like bitterns—using the old English word,—they were like a bittern, as he called it. They had no song, they could make but hootings. They had not a sweet note to sing. Alas! there are some such. Their style always seems to be—"If you hold what I preach you shall go to heaven: if you do not, I warn you very solemnly as the part of a faithful man, it is all up with you." It does not matter though there be but a shade of difference, though the unlearned cannot tell where there is any point of divergence, yet, according to these good brethren, we are for ever to be destroyed, because we cannot sit down at their feet and exclusively receive all the dogmas they teach. But, my dear friends, if any of you are labouring under the idea that the doctrine of election fosters such a spirit, allow me to disabuse you. On the contrary, it has been the desire of the true Calvinist,—not of the hyper-Calvinists, I cannot defend them—to feel that if he has received more light than another man, it is due to God's grace, and not to his merits. Therefore charity is inculcated, while boasting is excluded. We give our hand to every man that loves the Lord Jesus Christ, be he what he may or who he may. The doctrine of election, like the great act of election itself, is intended to divide not between Israel and Israel, but between Israel and the Egyptians,—not between saint and saint, but between saints and the children of this world. A man may be evidently of God's chosen family, and yet though elected, may not believe in the doctrine of election. I hold that there are many savingly called, who do not believe in effectual calling, and that there are a great many who persevere to the end, who do not believe the doctrine of final perseverance. We do hope that the hearts of many are a great deal better than their heads. We set not their fallacies down to any wilful opposition to the truth as it is in Jesus, but simply to an error in their judgments, which we pray God to correct. We hope that if they think us mistaken too, they will reciprocate the same Christian courtesy; and when we meet around the cross, we hope that we shall ever feel that we are one in Christ Jesus, even though as yet the ministering spirit has not led all of us into all the lengths and breadths of the truth.

Having thus cleared the way by cutting down a few of the trees that have been standing in my track, I proceed to notice the real effect of the doctrine of election upon the true Christian. I shall divide my subject thus:—The influence it has upon our opinions, our emotions, our experience, our devotions and our actions. I conceive that these five embrace the whole of the Christian life.

I. THE BELIEF IN THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION HAS A HIGHLY SALUTARY EFFECT UPON OUR OPINIONS.

Any observer who has looked through the history of the church, will not fail to have discovered that there has been a salting influence exercised by the doctrine of grace upon the minds of those who have been rooted and grounded in its strong and fruitful soil. At the present time, Lutheranism on the continent is scarcely better than infidelity. I have been informed by those who are capable of judging, that too many of the followers of Luther have become degenerate, have cast aside spirituality, and have really returned to the beggarly elements of Romanism, even though they persist in their Protestant profession. But, my brethren, the like cannot be said of the followers of Calvin. The Dutch Reformed Church, albeit that there may be much in it over which we might mourn, has never departed from the truth as it is in Jesus. Enter the place of worship where the Reformed occupy the pulpit, and you need not be at any loss to discover the way to heaven. There may be too much dryness in their prayers, and too much dulness in their mode of preaching, but the truth, the vital truth is there, and God still owns it in the salvation of sinners. They may not bear so high a fame or exert so wide an influence as their noble ancestors, but they have not turned aside to heresy, or perverted the truths of the gospel of Christ. And with all the defections of the present age, albeit that Sectarians of all classes have seceded to the Church of Rome, I can scarcely remember a solitary instance, where any man who has once embraced that "form of sound words" called the doctrines of grace, has ever forsaken them—at least, to turn aside to the desperate heresy of that false Church. The truth is that the doctrine of election, with the sister truths linked with it, acts as a great anchor. It holds fast the soul, and through the influence of the Holy Spirit, a man is brought to feel that he has something stable to rely upon, which he cannot and will not leave to be tossed about upon a sea, without chart or compass, at the mercy of every wind of doctrine. There is something in the doctrine, which as it were digs up the earth, and lets the soul strike its roots down

deep, that girds us about as with a triple belt of steel, and leaves no place in which the arrow of infidelity or false doctrine can find a place to wound us. As a Church and as a people banded together in the fear of the Lord, I hope we shall prove to the world in our experience, that though other churches may step aside gradually from their simplicity and steadfastness, we, forswearing everything which is not consistent with the naked simplicity and beauteousness of unclothed truth, will hold fast to the form of truth which we have received, and which has been taught us by the Spirit of God in his most Holy Book. Nor is this all. Election I take it—and I am here speaking of the whole set of truths which group around this as their central sun—has not only a salting power, but exercises a flavouring and seasoning power over all our other doctrines. The purest Evangelism springs from this truth. I will not say that the Arminian teaches that salvation is by works; this is so continually denied by the Arminian, that I will not charge a falsehood upon him, at which he professes to shudder; but at the same time, I do say, that the tendency of Arminianism is towards legality; it is nothing but legality which lays at the root of Arminianism. Any one doctrine of the Arminian which differs from the orthodox, let it be carefully dissected, will prove that after all his ground of difference is legality. I received but the other day, a letter from an earnest Arminian anxious to correct my opinions. He says, "If God has chosen some men from before the foundation of the world, is it not more consistent with his justice to conceive that he chose those who through life have used their best endeavours to serve him, rather than that he should choose the drunkard, or the harlot, to give them salvation?" Of course it is more consistent—Moses proves it—if salvation be by the law or by works: but with the gospel it is totally inconsistent, for Christ declares "The publicans and the harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before you"—that is, before you Pharisees—before the very men who in their own blind way had striven to win salvation by works.

My dear friends, after all, the kicking against the doctrine of election, is a kicking against the gospel, because this doctrine is a first principle in the divine plan of mercy, and when rightly known, it prepares our minds to receive all the other doctrines. Or on the contrary, misunderstand this, and you are pretty sure to make mistakes about all the rest. Take for instance *final perseverance*; some men say, "If we continue in faith, and if we continue in holiness, we shall certainly be saved at last." Do you not see at once that this is legality—that this is hanging our salvation upon our work—that this is making our eternal life to depend on something we do? Nay, the doctrine of *justification* itself, as preached by an Arminian, is nothing but the doctrine of salvation by works, after all; for he always thinks faith is a work of the creature, and a condition of his acceptance. It is as false to say that man is saved by faith as a work, as that he is saved by the deeds of the law. We are saved by faith as the gift of God, and as the first token of his eternal favour to us; but it is not faith as our work that saves, otherwise we are saved by works, and not by grace at all. If you need any argument upon this point, I refer you to our great apostle Paul, who so constantly combats the idea that works and grace can ever be united together, for he argues, "If it be of grace, then it is no more of works otherwise grace were no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more of grace, otherwise work is no more work."

You will I think, perceive, if you look through the roll of mighty preachers, that all those who have been great in the simple preaching of the doctrine of salvation by faith, have been men who held the doctrine of election; you cannot find, that I am aware of, but one or two old Puritanical works written by any but those who held this truth. You cannot discover a great divine—look back through centuries—who has not held it. There have been some small ones in modern times, and some earnest ones too, but the ages past have been all utterly destitute of anything like a great preacher who has not held this doctrine. I might make exception of Wesley, and Fletcher, of Madely, among modern divines—but in the olden times there was nothing like any great and successful preacher, who has not held the doctrine of election. This doctrine has always had an evangelizing power on the souls of men, so that those who have held it, have preached more clearly than any others, the simple truth that we are saved by grace, and not by works. And I would add, that I have also observed that the doctrine of election exercises another influence upon men's opinions; it renders them more clear and lucid. Out of hundreds of young persons who continually come to join our church, from all bodies of Christians, I have always discovered that those who have the best idea of Scripture—not simply looking at it from my own point of view, but allowing other people to be judges—are those who have

held this doctrine. Without it there is a lack of unity of thought, and generally speaking they have no idea whatever of a system of divinity. It is almost impossible to make a man a theologian unless you begin with this. You may if you please put a young believer to college for years, but unless you shew him this ground-plan of the everlasting covenant, he will make little progress, because his studies do not cohere, he does not see how one truth fits with another, and how all truths must harmonize together. Once let him get a clear idea that salvation is by grace, let him discover the difference between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace; let him clearly understand the meaning of election, as shewing the purpose of God, and its bearing upon other doctrines which shew the accomplishment of that purpose, and from that moment he is on the high road to become an instructive believer. He will always be ready to give a reason of the hope that is in him with meekness and with fear. The proof is palpable. Take any county throughout England, you will find poor men hedging and ditching that have a better knowledge of divinity than one half of those who come from our academies and colleges, for the reason simply and entirely that these men have first learned in their youth the system of which election is a centre, and have afterwards found their own experience exactly square with it. They have built upon that good foundation a temple of holy knowledge, which has made them fathers in the Church of God. Every other scheme is as nothing to build with, they are but wood, hay, and stubble. Pile what you will upon them, and they will fall. They have no system of architecture; they belong to no order of reason or revelation. A disjointed system makes its topstone bigger than its foundation; it makes one part of the covenant to disagree with another; it makes Christ's mystical body to be of no shape whatever; it gives Christ a bride whom he does not know and does not choose, and it puts him up in the world to be married to any one who will have him; but he is to have no choice himself. It spoils every figure that is used with reference to Christ and his Church. The good old plan of the doctrine of grace is a system which whence once received is seldom given up; when rightly learned, it moulds the thoughts of the heart, and it gives a sacred stamp to the characters of those who have once discovered its power.

II. In the second place, I come to notice THE INFLUENCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION UPON OUR EMOTIONS.

Here we speak not of matter of opinion, but of effect. The man who sighs for some divine witness that he is chosen of God is, I should think, necessarily humble. But the man who knows by gracious evidences that this seal is set upon him, is one from whose eyes every selfish pretension is for ever hid. If he could suppose that God had chosen him by the foresight and foreknowledge of some good qualities he possessed, he might be puffed up with unbearable conceit, but he knows God has chosen the foolish things, the weak things, the base things, the things that are not, things too worthless for notice in this world. He must take his place, therefore, down there among the offscouring of earth, before he can be lifted up by grace to sit among the adopted heirs of glory. There are some who profess to believe the doctrine of election who are as proud as Lucifer, but it is not the doctrine of election which makes them so; it is their own evil hearts that can misturn every thing good into evil. Such men, methinks, are rather fatalists in judgment, than believers in God the Father's love at heart. The doctrine itself, if it were rightly construed, would tend to humble such and keep them humble. Can you conceive a more contrite spirit than that expressed in these lines:—

“Why was I made to hear thy voice,
And enter where there's room,
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?
’Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forced me in;
Else I'd still refused to taste,
And perished in my sin.”

I ask whether such a hymn, which has in it the very gist of the doctrine, is not the meek utterance of a chastened soul? Can the haughty unsubdued heart entertain a sentiment like this?

“What was there in me to merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
’Tis even so, Father, we even must say,
For so it seemed good in thy sight.”

The language of this hymn ought to be in harmony with our daily life. If we are elect and precious, we must bow humbly before the throne and give God the glory of our salvation.

Take the doctrine again, with regard to another emotion of the soul, not simply of prostration, but the emotion of gratitude. There is a common bounty of God that appeals to common gratitude. Too often alas we pass by these ordinary mercies and slight the goodness that bestows them. "He maketh his sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." You may go abroad into the fields and see the liberal providence of the Creator; and when you do so, it behoves you to lift up your hearts and adore. But tell me, is there not a sweeter sense of gratitude to the soul that experiences his particular favour? Hath he brought thee into the banquetting house? Hath the banner of his love waved over thy head? Doth he place his left hand under thy head, and his right hand embrace thee? What gratitude will such choice attentions to his chosen ones stir up! This surely will put some stanzas into thy psalm of praise that never echoed through the gladsome mountains and fruitful valleys—a music too soft for the outer world and suited only to the inner chamber of affection. Boaz spake with a goodly salutation to the reapers. He was bountiful to the maidens that were gathering the sheaves. But greater kindness shewed he to Ruth. The gratitude she felt was more than theirs—"She fell on her face and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, why have I found grace in thine eyes that thou shouldest take knowledge of me seeing I am a stranger?" This electing favour, this choice comfort, this friendly speech, these words to the heart,—these are the things that awaken devout gratitude in the believer;—distinguishing and discriminating love wakes the echo of soul-stirring gratitude.

Then, again, it is sometimes said that this is a very gloomy doctrine. John Calvin is often described by those who hate the doctrines which he clarified and preached—for he is not the author of them any more than I am—he is described as being such a terrible ascetic, of forbidding countenance, preaching the destruction of infants, and revelling in other hideous sentiments, which in his soul he loathed, and none of his writings ever inculcate. These are the inventions of falsehood. John Calvin certainly was a sickly man and looked ill, and well he might. If an Arminian had to go through half the difficulties and trials, he must have been in his grave ten years before, he would have had no stamina in his soul to bear up against the bodily diseases which poor John Calvin had to endure. Yet there was he seen every morning going up to the divinity college, and delivering his lectures in the halls before his students, and we have the result of his labours in about fifty-six large volumes of most extraordinary divinity, which those who rage against him had better read before they open their mouths again. That man was preserved in the midst of troubles, perils, and woes, still a joyous man in his heart, with gleams of sunshine in his soul, the flash of which I have seen in his Commentary, and discovered in his Institutes continually. The tendency of the doctrine of election is not gloomy, but it is joyous. I know there have been times with me when my spirit has been so low that nothing could elevate it but this precious truth. I have even taken down old Elisha Coles' book on God's Sovereignty and read a chapter out of that as a tonic, and I have felt all the happier and better. Next to the Bible, such books tend to cheer one's soul more than any books I know. In my bright and happy days let me have other things, trifles if you will, but I must come to solidities when I lie on my couch, and especially when I come near to the grave's mouth, and I am ready to look into eternity. I know not what you will discover to comfort *you*, there is nothing but the doctrine of grace that satisfies me, nothing but that will give me any comfort. This doctrine hath filled our souls sometimes with joy that we knew scarcely how to contain; we have mounted as on the wings of eagles up to our God, who has made us to rejoice in him by reason of his distinguishing favour. What was it that made David dance before the ark? The doctrine of election; for what said he to the woman who mocked him for his dancing? He said, "God hath chosen me before thy father!" That truth moved him to mirth; and many an heir of heaven has danced before God's ark when the Spirit has revealed to him that his name is enrolled among the chosen ones of Jehovah.

III. Having shown the effect of this doctrine upon our emotions, in humbling us and in stirring us up, and carrying us away in holy joy and rapture, let us now ask WHAT EFFECT IT HAS ON OUR EXPERIENCE?

This is its effect upon the Christian's experience, it causes him to rejoice in the midst of deep despondency: and again, it sobers him in the midst of worldly joy. It seems to say to him—"Nevertheless rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice because your

names are written in heaven." On this I will not dwell, but perhaps this thought it is only fair to add, the doctrine of election has had in its raw misstated form a very painful influence upon the experience of many a young believer. There are many who have grace enough to convince them of sin, but not light enough to see the Saviour, who for a long time are kept in darkness, and the valley of the shadow of death through fear that they could not come to Christ rightly without they first knew their election. I had this matter brought before me this afternoon by one out of a numerous body of converts with whom I had the pleasure of conversing. Some good woman said to me, "I had a period of something like hope after I was brought to seek the Lord. Then suddenly the doctrine of election crossed my path, and I was for a long time in great distress about it." I was not surprised at her anxiety, but I was gratified to find that she had obtained the true solution of her knotty point. It was not by shutting her eyes to the truth as recorded in the Bible, but by having it commended to her conscience with the power of the Spirit that she found peace. And now the doctrine which once appeared to her dark bodings as an iron fence or a brazen wall to exclude sinners from coming to CHRIST is made clear to her faith as an open door to admit saints into the FATHER'S presence. Do you understand this my brethren? If I speak of *doctrine* in the divine order, the purpose of God the Father went before the work of God the Son. That is to say, we were inscribed as saints in the Book of Life before we were accounted sinners, and before the sentence of death passed upon us in Adam. When, however, I come to speak of *experience*, the order is reversed. We are brought to a knowledge of our sinfulness in the flesh before we learn our acceptance in the Beloved. If without seeming to forget the eternal Unity of the Three Persons in the Godhead I might venture to illustrate my meaning, I would put it to you in this way. God the Father first loved us, and gave us to Christ—that is the doctrine of the ancient covenant. But in showing you the doctrine of Redemption, Jesus Christ first finds us as lost sheep, and then having sanctified us by his one offering, he presents us to the Father. Or again, the *decree* of election is more ancient than the *fact* of our calling, as it stands in the councils of eternity. Not so in the ministration of the Holy Ghost. Here our *calling* is opened first, and the knowledge of our *election* follows after. And why? I answer for this reason: because in the call of grace we are always viewed as sinners, and invited and wooed as sinners; while in the election of grace we are always viewed as saints, as sanctified persons in the highest sense of the word. Well, then, it is as lost sinners we are invited to Christ; but it is as elect and precious ones we are presented to the Father without blame in love. Election shouts as loudly as any other doctrine—"Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." And if election be called to account for this, it replies—"Those that will come, God wills shall come, and those who hunger to come, God has made them hungry, and there is the proof of their election." Those that seek must find him, for election itself decrees, that he that seeks shall find, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

IV. And now I must be very brief indeed upon the next point, which is **THE EFFECT WHICH ELECTION HAS UPON OUR DEVOTIONS.**

Strange to say, this effect is discovered in a Christian, whatever his religious creed may be. My brother in Christ, thou that hast had thine eyes blinded for a long time with wrong doing, come and let us hear thee pray,—“Our Father, who art in heaven, we bless thee for thy grace which sought us when we were estranged from thee, for thy love which was forced upon us when we loved not thee. We praise thee, Lord, that thou didst call us, and didst bring us into the fold.” There the man, you see, is acknowledging the free-grace of God in his prayers. He goes on, “O Lord, when we look on those round about us who are still dead in sin, we weep over them, and we are compelled to say, ‘O Lord, it is of thy grace that we are what we are; thou hast made us to differ. Lord, take those others as brands from the burning, and stretch out thine hand to save them.’” Why, my dear man, you are not leaving it to their free-will at all, you are not leaving it to them, but asking God to choose them. You are talking Calvinism of the highest order; a man may preach Arminianism, but pray it he cannot; it would be blasphemy in prayer if he did. And so the doctrine of grace is the very inspiration of song. Kent's hymns are, I think, about as destitute of any poetry as any hymns I ever read, yet they roll with the full tide of melody. They give a simple statement of good sound high doctrine, and that is poetry, it is essential poetry, for poetry is, after all, the grandest form of truth. There will always be an effect produced in the loving child of God in his worship, by his belief, his instinctive though perhaps denied belief in the doctrine of election,—a belief which must exist in the faith of every child of God, however strenuously he may deny it a place in his creed. Then, again, does this doctrine

mar the Christian's watchfulness? Surely not. Believing himself to be chosen of God he is always watching unto prayer that he may not stain his garments, and bring dishonour upon the God who has honoured him. Or will this prevent him from searching the Scriptures, do you fancy, when he knows that in every line of Scripture he has a special interest? The devotion of those men who have held this great truth are beyond comparison. Not the ardour of the most enthusiastic believer in good works has ever rivalled the holy ardour of the man who has nothing to move him in his prayer, instrumentally beyond the grateful recognition of his election by God in Christ Jesus.

V. Then to conclude, WHAT EFFECT DOES ELECTION HAVE ON OUR ACTIONS?

If this doctrine be fully received and known, it breathes with all gratitude to God, an earnest desire to show forth his praise. It leads to all kinds of holy activity, and a hearty endeavour for the service of God. We are told continually by philosophic writers, that the idea of necessity,—the idea that anything is fixed or decreed—tends at once to damp activity. Never was there a grosser misrepresentation. Look abroad, everything that has been great in the spirit of the age has had a Necessitarian at the bottom of it. When Mahomet preached predestination, he took a necessitarian view. Did that doctrine of predestination make his followers idle? Did it not make them dash into the battle, declaring they must die when the appointed time came, and while they lived they must fight, and earnestly defend their faith? Or to take an instance from the history of our own country. Did the Calvinism of Oliver Cromwell make his Ironsides idle? Did they not keep their powder dry? They believed that they were chosen men of God, and were they not men of valour? Did this doctrine mar their energy? So in every good enterprise our churches are never behind. Are we backward in Missionary enterprize? Are we slow to send forth men of God to preach in foreign lands? Are we deficient in our efforts? Are we the people who would preach to a select few?—who would erect buildings for worship that the poor scarcely dare to enter? Are we the people who would keep our religious services for a privileged circle? The fact is, the most zealous, the most earnest, and the most successful of men, have been those who have held this truth, and therefore it cannot be true that this tends to damp our energies or thwart our zeal. But the best proof of this is especially in our lives. In the midst of God's holy congregation let us pledge ourselves to-night, that holding this truth, it makes us neither unholy nor inactive. It is our anxious endeavour to be clean as men chosen to bear the vessels of the Lord. It is our hearty prayer that in season and out of season we may labour for the winning of men's souls, knowing that to God's churches is committed the work of gathering in those sheep who are not of his fold, but who must be brought in, that there may be one flock and one Shepherd.

I have gone a great way into controversy to-night, it is not often I do so; but every builder in these times must have his sword upon his thigh, and I have shown you the sword to-night. May God lead every one of us to this glorious Book, to lay hold upon the truths taught us. And when we have seen a truth let us not be backward to declare it. Be sure that those who honour Christ in his Word shall be honoured by Christ in his glory. Oh that you here present, who have as yet never sought Christ, and know nothing of him, instead of being frightened by this doctrine, would now come to Christ and say, "Lord, take me as I am and save me, for thou canst do it, and unto thee shall be all the glory!" It would be well if some of you could say what a convert now present said when driven almost to despair. He said in his prayer, "Jesus, if thou wilt not have me, I will have thee;" so he laid hold upon Jesus. Presently he had a clear view of Christ and his cross, and could personally discern that if he would have Christ, then certainly Christ had already got him. Such a desire and resolution as that would never otherwise have sprung up in his soul. May God add a blessing on these remarks, for Jesu's sake! Amen.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

CONSTRAINING LOVE!

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, JUNE 3RD, 1860, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

“Oh love the Lord all ye his saints.”—Psalm xxxi. 23.

LOVE Jehovah—so the text runs. God the Father demands your love, and he deserves the warmest affection of your hearts. He has chosen you from before the foundation of the world. He has given his Son that he might redeem you with his precious blood. He has taken you into his family by divine adoption. He has “begotten you again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” It is to him that you address your prayers; it is he who grants you your requests. ’Tis he who glorified his Son Jesus, receiving him into the heavens as your representative; and he will glorify him yet again by gathering you together with all his people into the mansions provided for the blessed. “Oh love the Lord all ye his saints.” Love the Son! ’Tis he whose delights were with the sons of men of old, he who entered into suretyship and covenant engagement on the behalf of his elect. ’Tis he who with his precious blood has ransomed our souls and delivered them “from going down into the pit.” He is our mediator through whom we pray, and our intercessor who prays for us. He is our head, our husband, our king. He it is, even Jesus, who took our nature, and wears a body like our own. ’Tis he who imparts to us his mind now, and promises that hereafter we shall bear his likeness in glory. “Oh love the Lord all ye his saints.” Love the Holy Spirit! He hath been revealed to us, and is known by us as “the Comforter.” How endearing!

“He in our hearts of sin and woe
Hath bidden streams of grace arise,
Which unto endless glory flow.”

He has quickened us when when we were dead in sins; he has given us the grace of repentance and of faith; he has sanctified us, and kept and preserved us up till now. He has taken of the things of Christ and has showed them unto us; he has dwelt in our poor hearts; he has been our comforter, our instructor, and our daily teacher; ’tis he who convinced us of sin when as yet we perceived not its malignity; and ’tis he who inspires our hearts and souls with the supernatural will and disposition of living to God. It is of the Holy Spirit we are born again and made partakers of the new creation. It is by the same Spirit we are ultimately to be changed into the image of our Lord from glory to glory. “Oh love the Lord all ye his saints.” If a blind world sees no beauty in its God, and therefore does not love him, yet oh ye saints, love your God. If the enemies of the Most High set up other gods, and bow down before them, if they turn aside into crooked ways, and go a whoring after their false gods, yet, oh ye saints of his, stand fast and turn to your Jehovah, and love him ever more. Do not merely serve him, but love him. O house of Israel! be not his slaves; serve not your God as the heathen serve their gods, out of terror and fear, but “love the Lord all ye saints.” Be not as the subjects of Pharaoh, flogged to their work with the whip, but be ye the dutiful children of your loving Father. Serve him, I say, and rejoice before him. Let love sweeten all your services; give him all your hearts; make him the object still supreme of all your heart’s desire. Ever live to him as you live by him.

I shall have to ask your patience this evening, while I take a liberty with my text. It is this; I mean to confine its exhortation to one person of the Divine Trinity. I have already accepted it in its comprehensiveness, “Oh love Jehovah, all ye his saints.” To-night, I propose to use it as consonant with such an occasion

as the present, when we shall celebrate the supper of our Lord;—"Oh love the Lord *Jesus* all ye his saints;" and I shall endeavour, as the Holy Ghost shall enable me, first of all to *stir you up to love Jesus, by showing how meet and befitting it is that you should do so*; and then I shall seek to show the excellencies of loving *Jesus*; how profitable it will be to your spirit, if your heart is wholly inflamed with love to him.

I. First, then, my beloved, let one sentiment animate every mind, and one emotion fill every heart. "Oh love the Lord all ye his saints." I feel in beginning to exhort you to love Christ, that love is a stream which must flow spontaneously, a fountain that must bubble up of its own accord. When grace makes a man love Christ, it doth not do it by force, for love is a wine that cannot be trodden out of the grapes with pressure; it must freely distil. The heart cannot be forced to love. 'Tis true it can be constrained by love, but by no other constraint. Moses, with all the thunders that gave extraordinary sanction to his mission, never could make a heart love God. There is nothing but love that can create love, and love itself comes like droppings from the honeycomb. The only pressure it will deign to endure is the pressure of love. "Draw me," says love, "I will run after thee: drive me and I cannot but resist—my desire cannot even stir, much less can I run after thee with fervent attachment. My heart melted while my beloved spoke, because he was my beloved. Because he loved me, and spake right lovingly, my heart melted; had he been angry with me, had he spoken with coarse words my soul might have melted with fear, but it never could have been dissolved with love." Love, I say, is the only pressure which may be used to produce love, and yet, methinks, I may "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance," for it may so happen that while I strike some few sparks, they may touch the inflammable passion of your new-born spirits; the breath of the Spirit may fan them, and nurture them, till the love of your heart will seem as if it had received new fire.

Oh love! let me bring forth some of thy delicious sweets. Let me reason with the tenderest logic of the heart. "Love the Lord *Jesus* all ye his saints," because his Father loves him. It must always be right for us to love whom God loves. Now the Father hath much love, but his pre-eminent love is for his only-begotten Son. One with the Father from before all worlds, one in essence, as well as in dwelling-place and attribute, our *Jesus* was ever so dear to his Father's heart, that no tongue can tell, nor even heart conceive, how deep the well-spring whence love flowed from the Father to the Son. "The Father hath loved the Son, and given all things into his hand." He hath loved him, not only because of the unity of their nature, and because of their being one God, but the Father's love has flowed out to Christ as the Mediator. He has loved him for his obedience which he perfected, for the sufferings which he endured, for the ransom which he paid, for the battle which he fought, for the victory which he won. There was one eye that always followed Christ more closely than any other; there was one heart that always understood his pains, and one face that was always filled with celestial delight, when *Jesus* Christ overcame his enemies. "He who spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all." When he had delivered him up methinks his bowels yearned for him, his heart followed him, and his soul loved him, as he saw him rising superior to every enemy he stooped to meet, victorious in every conflict he deigned to wage, bearing every cross he condescended to undergo, and casting every load away from him when he had borne it the predestined time. The Father, I say, hath loved the Son, because of the great things he hath done, and therefore hath he delivered all things into his hand. And, oh heavenly Father! dost thou love the Lord *Jesus*, and shall my heart refuse to love him? Am I thy child, and shall not the object of my Father's love be the darling of my heart? What thou delightest in shall be my delight; where thou seest beauty, mine eye shall gaze with rapture; and where thy heart finds solace, there shall my heart find unceasing repose and ineffable joy. Doth Christ lie in thy bosom—he shall lie in mine; is his name engraven on thy heart—oh let it be engraven on mine also; dost thou love him—love him so that thou couldst not love him more—be it my privilege to love him thus with all the force and vehemence of my ransomed renovated nature, giving up all my spirit to be devoured by that consecrated fire of love to the Lord *Jesus* Christ.

Again, may I not stir you up my brethren, to love *Jesus* Christ, by reminding you how the angels love him? They have ever loved him since they have known him. It is true they are but the creatures of yesterday compared with him; he is the Everlasting Father; he is the Eternal One, and they, excellent in strength though they be,

are but created ones, yet, oh how they have loved him! It was their greatest pleasure to fly at his will ere he descended from heaven to earth. He had but to speak and it was done. His angels were spirits, and his ministers were flames of fire to do his will. Whatever had been the service he demanded of them, they would have thought it their highest heaven to have performed his will. And when he left the shrine of the blessed to come to earth and to suffer, ye know my brethren how they followed him along his starry road, how they would not leave him till the last parting moment, and then their songs pursued him down to earth, while they chanted "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." You know how ever afterwards they watched over him, how they came to him in the desert after his great battle with the enemy, and ministered to him. You know how he was seen of angels all along his pilgrimage, how in the garden there appeared unto him an angel strengthening him. You understand how around the bloody tree they pressed in strong desire to see a God in agonies, and wondered what it all could mean, until he said—"It is finished." They visited his tomb; an angel descended from heaven to roll the stone away from the door of the sepulchre; yea more, angels formed his escort when he ascended up to the realms of heaven. Well have we been taught to sing—

"They brought his chariot from on high,
To bear him to his throne,
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
The glorious work is done."

You know how now they bow before him, casting their crowns at his feet, and how they join the everlasting song of "Glory, and honour, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Do the angels love him—the angels that have never tasted of his flesh, that never needed to be washed in his blood, and shall not my heart love him? Spirits, spirits, spotless ones! do ye cry, "Worthy the Lamb"—my heart shall echo back your notes in louder strains—

"Worthy the Lamb that died," they cry,
"To be exalted thus;"
"Worthy the Lamb," our lips reply,
"For he was slain for us."

Stand back ye angels! give to man the first place in love; ye may adore, but ye cannot love as we love, for he is our brother, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. "He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." He is ours more than he is yours; he is man, he was never angel; he is our brother and kinsman, our next in blood. Jesus, our souls must love thee; we cannot permit even angels to be our rivals here; we will be jealous even of them. We press nearer to thy throne than even they can do.

On each of these themes I am compelled to be short, though there were indeed room enough for expansion, "Oh love the Lord all ye his saints," because your brothers that are caught up to the third heavens love him. And here let us just seek to bring this theme home to each one of us. How many dear friends and kinsfolk according to the flesh we have up yonder, where the clouds float not, and winters are not known, where tears trickle from no eyes, and furrows mar no brows! Up yonder we have friends; how often do we speak of them as lost, but how foolish we are; they were never more truly found. Is that mariner lost who has escaped from a shipwrecked vessel and stands upon the rock? No, no; they need not our pity; they might rather commiserate us, if there could be such a thing. We are struggling in the surf to reach the shore as they have done. And oh, my brethren, methinks that whatever they do above should be sufficient example for us to do the like here below. And now, hark, hark how they sing before the throne! Methinks among those glad voices I can distinguish some of friends, of fellow-labourers here below, of parents, of husbands, of wives, of children, that here worshipped with us, but have now gone up yonder to the higher seats of the divine synagogue, to sing in nobler strains than we can do. Hark how they sing, and what their theme—

"Jesus, the Lord their hearts employ
Jesus, my love, they sing;
Jesus, the life of both our joys,
Sounds loud from every string."

And, oh, how they love him! Methinks I see them; they have no tears, but joy may moisten their eyes as they looked at that dear face, and as they talk to one another with their hearts burning;—burning with fiercer fire and clearer flame than those favoured disciples who went to Emmaus with their Lord. They say to one another, “How glorious he is, and we are like him.” Methinks I hear their sweet conversation, as they count the crowns upon his brow; as they bow down and adore; as they stand up and admire, and then, transported with delight, fly into his arms again. With him in paradise continually, in sweet communion with him,—oh, how they love! We are such cold creatures; like icebergs are our hearts, but theirs are like flames of fire. Oh, shall it not be enough to stir us up to love the Saviour, when we think how they love him who have crossed the Jordan, and have gone before.

But, come, we will take another argument. Surely I need not say to you, let us love the Lord Jesus, because everything that could possibly enamour our souls and constrain our love is to be found in him. There is a thing called beauty which wins upon the hearts of men. Strong Samson is weak as a child before its enchantment. Mighty men, not a few, have bowed before it, and paid it homage; but if you want beauty, look into the face of Jesus; that marred visage hath more loveliness in it than in all the smiles of Cleopatra, or of the fabled maidens of days of yore. There is no beauty anywhere but in Christ. O sun, thou art not fair, when once compared with him. Ye stars, ye are not bright, if ye be set side-by-side with his eyes, that burn like lamps of fire. O fair world, and grand creation of a glorious God, thou art but a dim and dusky blot compared with the splendours of his face. When you shall see Christ, my brethren, you will be compelled to say that you never knew what loveliness was before. When the clouds are swept away, when the curtains that hide him from your view are drawn aside, you will find that not anything you have seen will stand a moment's comparison with him. You will be ready to break out “O, black sun, black moon, dark stars, as compared with my lovely Lord Jesus.” I say, my brethren, if you want one to love fairer than the children of men, who shall always be worthy of your love, and always show to the eyes of others, that there was a sufficient reason for your giving up your heart to him. Love Jesus, for there ne'er was such beauty in the world as there is in him.

Does wisdom win the love of men? Is he not wise—wiser than all the sons of men? Doth strength win love? Do martial triumphs, prowess, and renown subdue the heart? Daughters of Jerusalem, would ye love a hero? Go forth and meet King Jesus as he returns red from the battle-field, glorious in triumph. Do men sometimes give their love because they at first are led to reverence the character, and then afterwards to esteem the person? Oh, think of the matchless character of Christ Jesus! Were there ever such perfections as meet in him? He hath not the excellency of one man, but of all men, without the faults of any. He is not merely the Rose of Sharon, but he is the Lily of the Valley. He may not only be compared at one time to the citron among the trees of the wood, but anon he is as the goodly cedar. All types of beauty fail, and “apples of gold in pictures of silver,” lose their force when we come to treat of him. We must coin new words before we can describe the excellencies of Christ. In fact, we must have done with tongues, and go into that land where spirits utter their thoughts without the motion of lip or the expiration of breath, ere we shall be able to express the surpassing beauty, the unuttered excellency of the glorious character of Christ. Oh, love him then, ye people of God; love him; look into his face, and see if ye can help it; look, I say, at his character, and see if ye can resist it. But I tell you, if ye love him not, it is because ye do not know him.

“His worth if all the nations knew
Sure the whole earth *must* love him too.”

It were impossible to know Christ, and yet not to have the heart affected by him; you must be overpowered by his charms. One look of his eyes, one touch of his hand, shall ravish your heart. Once be able to see his face, and let him but dart a glance at you, your two hearts must be united. Is thy soul to thee like a river rippling in its bed alone; and is Christ yonder, like another river gloriously flowing towards the sea? Pray the Lord to bend the stream of thy love till it falls into the river of his love, and then you shall be as two streams, whose banks were once divisions, but both are now melted into one. You can then say with the apostle. “For me to live is Christ,” I run in the same channel; “and for me to die

were gain," I shall be lost in the ocean, swallowed up in boundless and eternal love. "Oh love the Lord all ye his saints."

Yet once more, and this perhaps shall be the best argument I can give the one which, after all, has the most effect upon us. We love him—why? Because the Father loved him? Oh no; we are too gross for that. Do we love him because the angels love him? We are not wise enough for that. Do we love him because the redeemed love him? I fear, my brethren, we are still too carnal for that. Do we love him because of his own excellencies? I trow not, at first; that is an after attainment of grace. We love him, *because he first loved us*. Come, then, love him, Oh ye saints, because he first loved you.

Here is a theme before me which almost imposes silence on my tongue. There are some themes which make one wish that some teacher more able would accept the responsibility of explaining them, because we are afraid of marring their symmetry while we grapple with their details. The picture stretches out as it were before my mind's eye with dazzling glory, but I cannot sketch it so that others can see all its grandeur. Christ's love to us we sometimes guess at, but, ah, it is so far beyond our thoughts, our reasonings, our praises, and our apprehension too, in the sweetest moments of our most spiritual ecstasy,—who can tell it? "Oh, how he loved us!" When Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus, the Jews exclaimed with surprise—"Behold how he loved him." Verily ye might say the like with deeper emphasis. There was nothing in you to make him love you, but he left heaven's throne for you. As he came down the celestial hills, methinks the angels said "Oh, how he loved them." When he lay in the manger an infant, they gathered round and said, "Oh how he loves." But when they saw him sweating in the garden, when he was put into the crucible, and began to be melted in the furnace, then indeed, the spirits above began to know how much he loved us. Oh Jesus! when I see thee mocked and spit upon—when I see thy dear cheeks become a reservoir for all the filth and spittle of unholy mouths—when I see thy back rent with knotted whips—when I behold thy honour and thy life both trailing in the dust—when I see thee charged with madness, with treason, with blasphemy—when I behold thy hands and thy feet pierced, thy body stripped naked and exposed—when I see thee hanging on the cross between earth and heaven, in torments dire and excruciating—when I hear thee cry "I thirst," and see the vinegar thrust to thy lips—when I hear thy direful cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," my spirit is compelled to say, "Oh how he loves!" He could die, but he could not cease to love; he could be rent in pieces, but he could not be rent away from his people; he could be buried in the grave, but his love could not be buried; it must live, it must exist, it cannot be sundered from his chosen.

Think, too, my brethren, how much he must have loved you when you were going on in sin. You used to call his ministers hypocrites—his people fools; his Sabbaths were idle days with you; his book, his precious book, was unread; you never sought his grace. Sometimes, perhaps, you used to curse him, perhaps persecute him in his children, and yet he loved you. And when his Spirit came after you, you tried to quench it; you would not attend the place where the arrow had first stuck in your conscience; you went to the theatre, you tried to quench the Spirit, but his love would not be mastered by you; he had resolved to have you, and the bridegroom would win your heart. Oh how he loved you, when he received you all black and filthy to his bosom, gave you the kiss of his lips, and saluted you as his own fair spouse. Since then bethink you, how he has watched over you in sickness, how he has carried you in his bosom when the road was rough, how he has covered you with his wings, and nurtured you with his feathers. Think, I beseech you, how he seems to have moved heaven and earth to bless you; how he has always had a ready ear to hear your prayer, and a swift foot to run to your immediate help. Remember this, above all things—how ill you have requited all his love. You have served him but little, given him the fag ends, you have brought him no sweet cane, neither have you filled him with the fat of your sacrifices. You have given him no bullocks out of your fold, no he-goats out of your flock. You have offered to him the blind and the maimed; you have given him sacrifice, but have you requited him according to his kindness to you? He bled for you; have you resisted unto bloodstriving against sin? He gave his whole self for you; have you given your whole being up to him? There was not a single nerve in his body which did not thrill with love to you; there was not a drop of blood which had not in its red fluid your name. Surely his body, whole and sole, was all yours—his humanity and his Godhead too; and are you all his, and can you

say—no, I will not ask you, you cannot say—that you have made a dedication to him, as truly as he made for you. Oh, love him then, because of his love to you. I am sure you don't know how much he loved, because if you did it would break your heart to think you love him so little. Sweet Master, if thou wert here to-night to tell thy people how thou lovest them, thou wouldst break their hearts. I am a poor spokesman for thee, Jesus! Would that thou wouldst speak thyself. Come hither—nay, thou art here; thou art wherever two or three are met together. Come hither to thy people then, and wrap them in thy crimson vest, and tell them all thy name! Speak unto them and say, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Shed thy love in their hearts. May they have an infinite consciousness of thy infinite, thy boundless, thy fathomless, thy endless love to them, and then thy work is done; there will be no need for thy poor servant to cry, "Oh love the Lord all ye his saints," for they will love thee to the full.

II. In the second part of my subject I am now to shew you some of THE EXCELLENCIES OF LOVING JESUS.

"Oh love the Lord all ye his saints." There are many excellencies which flow from love. Love is an ointment that giveth forth a sweet smell: but better than that, it is an ointment which healeth wounds, that giveth health unto the marrow of the bones. Love hath a wondrous power. It may seem but little in itself, but it makes men giants. He who bathes in the stream of love, becomes invulnerable, nay, he becomes omnipotent. Wherein he doth not love he is weak; but so far as he loveth is he strong beyond all thought of weakness. Brethren, one of the first things which love to Christ will do for you, is, it will make you bear suffering for Christ with joyousness. Remember the martyr Lambert, one of the earliest of the martyrs burnt for Christ's sake, by the Papists. He was treated as badly as any could have been, for when tied to the stake, the fagots were green, and the fire exceeding slow, and he burnt away by slow degrees, feet and legs being consumed; while yet life was in the body; and that poor soul, when the fire was just about to take away life, though he had been hours burning, was seen to lift up such poor hands as he had—black and charred things—and clap them as best he could, and say, out of that poor black face, that looked like a cinder in the flame, "None but Jesus; none but Jesus." With that he rode in his chariot of fire up to Christ. Perhaps you have to endure some cruel mockings at times. It may be that to serve Christ becomes arduous work for you. Love him, and you cannot tell how easy it will be to suffer for him. In fact, the more you have to suffer for him the more happy you will be. You will count it all joy; nay, you will rejoice in that day, and leap for joy when you are allowed to suffer for the name of him who suffered so much for you. As sure as ever you flinch at the little fire which these mild and gentle days can afford you; as sure as ever you start back at the faint rebukes which the world gives you now, you may infer that you don't love your Master as you ought; for when you love him, then will you feel that anything and everything that the world can do, can never move you from him.

"The cords that bind around my heart,
Tortures and racks may rend them off,
But they can never, never part
The hold I have on Christ my Lord."

Love will not only make suffering easy, but further, it will make service joyous. Oh, don't you know in the Church how much shrinking there is from labour for Christ. Why is it in any Church that there are found brethren who are always for getting others to work, and not wishing to do it themselves. It is lack of love, my brethren; for as soon as ever we love we shall be wanting to do something for Christ. When we love each other, what things we think of in order to give pleasure. With what solicitude does the wife think what she could do to bring the smile upon the husband's face; and how will the loving husband think of some means by which he can show his love to his wife. Is it so with parents and with children. Have not you seen the mother sitting up night after night without any sleep, and yet she was not weary? Oh, she was very, very weary, but she did not know it; her love would not let her feel it. Have you never seen the tender spouse watching over her husband at the brink of death, never taking her eyes from him, forgetting to eat bread, thinking of nothing but him? She sleeps as she sits in that chair. It is hardly for a moment. Did he start? She wakes. Was not the fever heavy on him? She is ever awake, and all the while she holds on, though her eyes are red with

sleeplessness. She says she could do it, and she certainly could do it too, night after night, and never fly. And so, do but get your heart full of love to Christ, and it is wordyous what you can do for him. Nothing you can do for him will be too much. See how the Moravians served their Master. There was an island in the West Indies, upon which some of the Moravians came to land, and they wanted to preach the gospel to the blacks. They asked what would be the condition upon which they would be allowed to land. The cruel terms were these—that they must themselves become slaves. Two of those Moravian brethren became slaves; they bent their back to the lash that they might toil by day, in order to have the opportunity by night of preaching the gospel to their poor black companions in captivity. You will remember too, that when there was found somewhere in Africa a place where there were lepers confined, persons whose limbs had rotted away with foul disease, two Moravians were found to go in there, and though they knew they could not come out alive, and that they must soon be the subjects of leprosy themselves, and die by slow degrees. They were ready enough, and willing enough to do it all. The love of the Moravians, brethren, seemed to me to be one of the chiefest examples of what the love of every Christian should be. There should never be any choice nor stopping. Does Jesus want me here? Can he make better use of me dead than alive? Let me die. Will he be more honoured in my poverty than in my wealth? Let me be poor. Will he be more glorified by my toil than by my rest, or by my sickness than by my health? Then be it so. As he surrendered all to the Father, so will I surrender all to him. As the Father gave all into his hands, so will I give all into his hands to be his for ever and ever. Love to Jesus will make all service for him to be joyous.

Again, love to Christ will make obedience sweet. "Love makes our willing feet in swift obedience move." What things we will do for those we love that we would not do for anybody else. So for Christ we will do many things, because we love him, without consulting our feelings, or considering whether any benefit is to accrue, or whether, as some say, it will be of any use. Be it absolutely a command, or more gently, a counsel: "whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Sometimes when I think of many good brethren and sisters here that know it to be their duty to be baptized in his name, and come to his table and celebrate his ordinance in remembrance of him, and they don't do it, though Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments," I don't know what to say for them; I must let them speak for themselves. I sometimes think, surely if they loved their Master better, they would count obedience a pleasure. I think they would say, "I made haste, and I layed not to keep thy commandments," and they would be ready at once to run in the Lord's way, without making exceptions to any of his commandments.

Still more, my brethren, love for Christ will make communion very sweet. How pleasant it is to talk to those we love. Give us a good friend, and you have given us a very great boon. A rainy day in doors with a good companion is very happy; but the best landscape on a sunny day, in the society of those for whom we have no affection, is but a poor thing. Let me be with Christ in the meanest place, rather than with the sinner in his high places. Luther used to say, "I would rather fall with Christ than stand with Cæsar;" and might you not say you would rather be with Christ in poverty than with anybody else in all the glory and grandeur of this world? Once love Christ, and you will never be content to be far away from him. You will say with the spouse, "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste." Friend, how long is it since you had fellowship with Christ? Ask the question round, brethren. Each man, and each woman, answer it. You are a believer, your faith is in Christ; how long is it since you have seen your Master? How long since you have talked with him? How long since he has spoken to you? Pass that question round again, I say, and let every man answer it. I am afraid there be some Christians who have not communion with Christ by the month together, nay, I fear by the year together. Oh, what Christians must you be. Where is that wife's love who never wishes for a husband's smile all through the year? Were there much affection between two friends who could live in the same house, and not speak? Oh, brothers and sisters, let us examine ourselves, and begin to doubt if we can be happy without fellowship with Christ. Christ is so precious to a believer, that the believer and Christ should be like two turtle doves, that cannot live unless they are in each other's company. Of the turtle dove it is said, that when its mate is gone you can never make the turtle consort with another, bring all the doves you will. It is

a lonely dove, and will not be consoled; there it sits, and pines and coos itself to death, mourning for its mate. The only way to kill a Christian would be to take Christ from him. You might bring him the other things, and yet never find another name, never another to whom his heart would be knit. Nay, if you took up all the saints that have been buried, you could never find one that the believer could consort with as he has consorted with Christ, and held fellowship with him. Let us all be like the dove then, and cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart.

I think there is no need to say any more on this point, or add another syllable, except it be just this one—love to Christ will make trust easy. I say love to Christ will make trust easy. You have heard that often-told story of the wife on board ship who saw her husband cool and calm when the wind was blowing hurricanes and the masts were creaking. She asked how it was, and the husband, reaching a sword, ran upon her, put it to her very breast, and the wife didn't start for a minute. "Wife," said he, "how is it you are not afraid? this sword is sharp." "Oh," saith she, "but it is in my husband's hand." "Well," said he, "and though that wind is terrible, it is in my Father's hands." Love can trust under any circumstances. It is wonderful how some men have been betrayed into trust. You could not excuse them at first; they have put their hand and become security for another, because they really loved the person so much that they could not think it possible he could deceive them; and we must not be too severe, because we don't know the circumstances between the two in these cases. We love because we cannot help it: we trust where we love. How the child trusts the mother. The mother has lost her way; she is on a bleak hill; the snow is falling, and she cannot find the track. The path is covered, and there may be a wolf in the distance, and the mother may hear it, but the infant does not start; it sleeps on her breast, and if it wakes it toys with the mother's cheek, and whilst she is full of alarm, it knows no fear because it loves. And see how the child will spring into your arms, though he be on some height, and if he should fall he would hurt himself. "I will catch you child," and it is done; he springs. And so, where there is love there will be trust. Do you find it hard to believe Christ? Love him better, and it will be easy. Do you find it hard to think that all things will work together for your good? Love him, and you will be sure of it; you will be quite sure of it. "It cannot be," say you, "that my sweet Lord Jesus will ever do me an ill turn; I love him so well, and he loves me so well. Let him smite me, and I will kiss his hand; I am sure that he means it in love, it is but a love pat upon a child. Even when he frowns at me I will still believe that he has a smiling face, only he conceals it to make better known the purpose of his grace. Yea, though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. I will say, he did it, I will trust in him.

Thus, brethren, I think I have given you ample reasons for loving Christ. As for those of you who have never trusted him. I cannot say to you love him; trust him first, and you shall love him afterwards. Give your soul up into his hands. I charge you by the living God, have done with your self-righteousness, and flee to Christ who has bled on the cross, and when you have been washed in his blood, and robed in his righteousness, then shall you love him. O Jesus, O Jesus, come forth and win men's hearts to-night! Thou heavenly lover, our sweet Master, come we beseech thee! When I tell thy story, men will not love thee; nay, should I tell it with tears in my eyes they would not believe me. Come, tell it thyself to them; on their way home break their hearts in love to thee. May they to-night fulfil the verse we have often sung in thy honour—

"Dissolved by thy goodness, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found."

Jesus! bring the wanderers home. Reclaim thy lost sheep! May there be joy on earth, and joy in heaven, over sinners whom thou hast found, sinners whom thou didst come to seek and to save. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." The Lord add his blessing for Jesu's sake.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

ELECTION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 2, 1855, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."—2 Thessalonians ii. 13, 14.

If there were no other text in the sacred word except this one, I think we should all be bound to receive and acknowledge the truthfulness of the great and glorious doctrine of God's ancient choice of his family. But there seems to be an inveterate prejudice in the human mind against this doctrine; and although most other doctrines will be received by professing Christians, some with caution, others with pleasure, yet this one seems to be most frequently disregarded and discarded. In many of our pulpits it would be reckoned a high sin and treason to preach a sermon upon *election*, because they could not make it what they call a "practical" discourse. I believe they have erred from the truth therein. Whatever God has revealed, he has revealed for a purpose. There is nothing in Scripture which may not, under the influence of God's Spirit, be turned into a practical discourse: for "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable" for some purpose of spiritual usefulness. It is true, it may not be turned into a free-will discourse—that we know right well—but it can be turned into a practical free-grace discourse: and free-grace practice is the best practice, when the true doctrines of God's immutable love are brought to bear upon the hearts of saints and sinners. Now, I trust this morning some of you who are startled at the very sound of this word, will say, "I will give it a fair hearing; I will lay aside my prejudices; I will just hear what this man has to say." Do not shut your ears and say at once, "It is high doctrine." Who has authorized you to call it high or low? Why should you oppose yourself to God's doctrine? Remember what became of the children who found fault with God's prophet, and exclaimed, "Go up, thou bald-head; go up, thou bald-head." Say nothing against God's doctrines, lest haply some evil beast should come out of the forest and devour you also. There are other woes beside the open judgment of heaven—take heed that these fall not on your head. Lay aside your prejudices: listen calmly, listen dispassionately: hear what Scripture says; and when you receive the truth, if God should be pleased to reveal and manifest it to your souls, do not be ashamed to confess it. To confess you were wrong yesterday, is only to acknowledge that you are a little wiser to-day; and instead of being a reflection on yourself, it is an honour to your judgment, and shows that you are improving in the knowledge of the truth. Do not be ashamed to learn, and to cast aside your old doctrines and views, but to take up that which you may more plainly see to be in the Word of God. But if you do not see it to be here in the Bible, whatever I may say, or whatever authorities I may plead, I beseech you, as you love your souls, reject it; and if from this pulpit you ever hear things contrary to this Sacred Word, remember that the Bible must be the first, and God's minister must lie underneath it. We must not stand on the Bible to preach, but we must preach with the Bible above our heads. After all we have preached, we are well aware that the mountain of truth is higher than our eyes can discern; clouds and darkness are round about its summit, and we cannot discern its topmost pinnacle; yet we will try to preach it as well as we can. But since we are

mortal, and liable to err, exercise your judgment; "Try the spirits whether they are of God;" and if on mature reflection on your bended knees, you are led to disregard election—a thing which I consider to be utterly impossible—then forsake it; do not hear it preached, but believe and confess whatever you see to be God's Word. I can say no more than that by way of exordium.

Now, first, I shall speak a little concerning the *truthfulness* of this doctrine: "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." Secondly, I shall try to prove that this election is *absolute*: "He hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation," not *for* sanctification, but "*through* sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Thirdly, this election is *eternal*: because the text says, "God hath *from the beginning* chosen you." Fourthly, it is *personal*: "He hath chosen *you*." Then we will look at the *effects* of the doctrine—see what it does; and lastly, as God may enable us, we will try and look at its *tendencies*, and see whether it is indeed a terrible and licentious doctrine. We will take the flower, and like true bees, see whether there be any honey whatever in it; whether any good can come of it, or whether it is an un-mixed, undiluted evil.

I. First, I must try and prove that the doctrine is *TRUE*. And let me begin with an *argumentum ad hominem*; I will speak to you according to your different positions and stations. There are some of you who belong to the Church of England, and I am happy to see so many of you here. Though now and then I certainly say some very hard things about Church and State, yet I love the old Church, for she has in her communion many godly ministers and eminent saints. Now, I know you are great believers in what the Articles declare to be sound doctrine. I will give you a specimen of what they utter concerning *election*, so that if you believe them, you cannot avoid receiving election. I will read a portion of the 17th Article upon Predestination and Election:—

"Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath continually decreed by his counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God be called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due season: they through grace obey the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity."

Now, I think any churchman, if he be a sincere and honest believer in Mother Church, must be a thorough believer in election. True, if he turns to certain other portions of the Prayer Book, he will find things contrary to the doctrines of free-grace, and altogether apart from scriptural teaching; but if he looks at the Articles, he must see that God hath chosen his people unto eternal life. I am not so desperately enamoured, however, of that book as you may be; and I have only used this Article to show you that if you belong to the Establishment of England you should at least offer no objection to this doctrine of predestination.

Another human authority whereby I would confirm the doctrine of election, is, the old Waldensian creed. If you read the creed of the old Waldenses, emanating from them in the midst of the burning heat of persecution, you will see that these renowned professors and confessors of the Christian faith did most firmly receive and embrace this doctrine, as being a portion of the truth of God. I have copied from an old book one of the Articles of their faith:—

"That God saves from corruption and damnation those whom he has chosen from

the foundations of the world, not for any disposition, faith, or holiness that he foresaw in them, but of his mere mercy in Christ Jesus his Son, passing by all the rest according to the irreprehensible reason of his own free-will and justice."

It is no novelty, then, that I am preaching; no new doctrine. I love to proclaim these strong old doctrines, which are called by nickname Calvinism, but which are surely and verily the revealed truth of God as it is in Christ Jesus. By this truth I make a pilgrimage into the past, and as I go, I see father after father, confessor after confessor, martyr after martyr, standing up to shake hands with me. Were I a Pelagian, or a believer in the doctrine of free-will, I should have to walk for centuries all alone. Here and there a heretic of no very honourable character might rise up and call me brother. But taking these things to be the standard of my faith, I see the land of the ancients peopled with my brethren—I behold multitudes who confess the same as I do, and acknowledge that this is the religion of God's own church.

I also give you an extract from the old Baptist Confession. We are Baptists in this congregation—the greater part of us at any rate—and we like to see what our own forefathers wrote. Some two hundred years ago the Baptists assembled together, and published their articles of faith, to put an end to certain reports against their orthodoxy which had gone forth to the world. I turn to this old book—which I have just published*—and I find the following as the

3rd Article: "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated, or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ, to the praise of his glorious grace; others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation, to the praise of his glorious justice. These angels and men thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished. Those of mankind that are predestinated to life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving him thereunto."

As for these human authorities, I care not one rush for all three of them. I care not what they say, *pro* or *con*, as to this doctrine. I have only used them as a kind of confirmation to your faith, to show you that whilst I may be railed upon as a heretic and as a hyper-Calvinist, after all I am backed up by antiquity. All the past stands by me. I do not care for the present. Give me the past and I will hope for the future. Let the present rise up in my teeth, I will not care. What though a host of the churches of London may have forsaken the great cardinal doctrines of God, it matters not. If a handful of us stand alone in an unflinching maintenance of the sovereignty of our God, if we are beset by enemies, ay, and even by our own brethren, who ought to be our friends and helpers, it matters not, if we can but count upon the past; the noble army of martyrs, the glorious host of confessors, are our friends; the witnesses of truth stand by us. With these for us, we will not say that we stand alone, but we may exclaim, "Lo, God hath reserved unto himself seven thousand that have not bowed the knee unto Baal." But the best of all is, *God is with us*.

The great truth is always the Bible, and the Bible alone. My hearers, you do not believe in any other book than the Bible, do you? If I could prove this from all the books in Christendom; if I could fetch back the Alexandrian library, and

* Baptist Confession of Faith. Paper covers,—4d.—Cloth, 8d.—Roan, gilt edges, 1s.
London: Alabaster & Passmore, Paternoster Row; and J. Paul, Chapter-House Court, St. Paul's.

prove it thence, you would not believe it any more; but you surely will believe what is in God's Word.

I have selected a few texts to read to you. I love to give you a whole volley of texts when I am afraid you will distrust a truth, so that you may be too astonished to doubt, if you do not in reality believe. Just let me run through a catalogue of passages where the people of God are called *elect*. Of course if the people are called *elect*, there must be *election*. If Jesus Christ and his apostles were accustomed to style believers by the title of *elect*, we must certainly believe that they were so, otherwise the term does not mean anything. Jesus Christ says, "Except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved; but for the *elect's* sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days." "False Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the *elect*." "Then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his *elect* from the four winds, from the uttermost parts of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven."—Mark xiii. 20, 22, 27. "Shall not God avenge his own *elect*, who cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?"—Luke xviii. 7. Together with many other passages which might be selected, wherein either the word "*elect*," or "*chosen*," or "*foreordained*," or "*appointed*," is mentioned; or the phrase "*my sheep*," or some similar designation, showing that Christ's people are distinguished from the rest of mankind.

But you have concordances, and I will not trouble you with texts. Throughout the epistles, the saints are constantly called "*the elect*." In the Colossians we find Paul saying, "Put on therefore, as the *elect* of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies. When he writes to Titus, he calls himself, "*Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect*." Peter says "*Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*. Then if you turn to John, you will find he is very fond of the word. He says, "*The elder to the elect lady*;" and he speaks of our "*elect sister*." And we know where it is written, "*The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you*." They were not ashamed of the word in those days; they were not afraid to talk about it. Now-a-days the word has been dressed up with diversities of meaning, and persons have mutilated and marred the doctrine, so that they have made it a very doctrine of devils, I do confess; and many who calls themselves believers, have gone to rank Antinomianism. But notwithstanding this, why should I be ashamed of it, if men do wrest it? We love God's truth on the rack, as well as when it is walking upright. If there were a martyr whom we loved before he came on the rack, we should love him more still when he was stretched there. When God's truth is stretched on the rack, we do not call it falsehood. We love not to see it racked, but we love it even when racked, because we can discern what its proper proportions ought to have been if it had not been racked and tortured by the cruelty and inventions of men. If you will read many of the epistles of the ancient fathers, you will find them always writing to the people of God as the "*elect*." Indeed the common conversational term used among many of the churches by the primitive Christians to one another was that of the "*elect*." They would often use the term to one another, showing that it was generally believed that all God's people were manifestly "*elect*."

But now for the verses that will positive prove the doctrine. Open your Bibles and turn to John xv. 16, and there you will see that Jesus Christ has chosen his people, for he says, "*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you*." Then in the 19th verse, "*If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are*

not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Then in the 17th chapter and the 8th and 9th verses, "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." Turn to Acts xiii. 48: "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." They may try to split that passage into hairs if they like; but it says, "ordained to eternal life" in the original as plainly as it possibly can; and we do not care about all the different commentaries thereupon. You scarcely need to be reminded of Romans viii., because I trust you are all well acquainted with that chapter and understand it by this time. In the 29th and following verses, it says, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" It would also be unnecessary to repeat the whole of the 9th chapter of Romans. As long as that remains in the Bible, no man shall be able to prove Arminianism; so long as that is written there, not the most violent contortions of the passage will ever be able to exterminate the doctrine of election from the Scriptures. Let us read such verses as these—"For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger." Then read the 22nd verse, "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory," Then go on to Romans xi. 7—"What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded," In the 5th verse of the same chapter, we read—"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." You, no doubt, all recollect the passage in 1 Cor. i. 26—29: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." Again, remember the passage in 1 Thess. v. 9;—God hath not appointed *us* to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." and then you have my text, which methinks would be quite enough. But, if you need any more, you can find them at your leisure, if we have not quite removed your suspicions as to the doctrine not being true.

Methinks, my friends, that this overwhelming mass of Scripture testimony must stagger those who dare to laugh at this doctrine. What shall we say of those who have so often despised it, and denied its divinity; who have railed at its justice, and dared to defy God and call him an Almighty tyrant, when they have heard of his having elected so many to eternal life? Canst thou, O rejector! cast it out of the Bible? Canst thou take the penknife of Jehudi and cut it out of the Word of God?

Wouldst thou be like the woman at the feet of Solomon, and have the child rent in halves, that thou mightest have thy half? Is it not here in Scripture? And is it not thy duty to bow before it, and meekly acknowledge what thou understandest not—to receive it as the truth even though thou couldst not understand its meaning? I will not attempt to prove the justice of God in having thus elected some and left others. It is not for me to vindicate my Master. He will speak for himself, and he does so:—"Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?" Who is he that shall say unto his father, "What hast thou begotten?" or unto his mother, "What hast thou brought forth?" "I am the Lord—I form the light and create darkness. I, the Lord, do all these things. Who art thou that repliest against God? Tremble and kiss his rod; bow down and submit to his sceptre; impugn not his justice, and arraign not his acts before thy bar, O man!

But there are some who say, "It is hard for God to choose some and leave others." Now, I will ask you one question. Is there any of you here this morning who wishes to be holy, who wishes to be regenerate, to leave off sin and walk in holiness? "Yes, there is," says some one, "I do." Then God has elected you. But another says, "No; I don't want to be holy; I don't want to give up my lusts and my vices." Why should you grumble, then, that God has not elected you to it? For if you were elected you would not like it, according to your own confession. If God this morning had chosen you to holiness, you say you would not care for it. Do you not acknowledge that you prefer drunkenness to sobriety, dishonesty to honesty? You love this world's pleasures better than religion; then why should you grumble that God has not chosen you to religion? If you love religion, he *has* chosen you to it. If you desire it, he has chosen you to it. If you do not, what right have you to say that God ought to have given you what you do not wish for? Supposing I had in my hand something which you do not value, and I said I shall give it to such-and-such a person, you would have no right to grumble that I did not give to you. You could not be so foolish as to grumble that the other has got what you do not care about. According to your own confession, many of you do not want religion, do not want a new heart and a right spirit, do not want the forgiveness of sins, do not want sanctification; you do not want to be elected to these things: then why should you grumble? You count these things but as husks, and why should you complain of God who has given them to those whom he has chosen? If you believe them to be good and desire them, they are there for thee. God gives liberally to all those who desire; and first of all, he makes them desire, otherwise they never would. If you love these things, he has elected you to them, and you may have them; but if you do not, who are you that you should find fault with God, when it is your own desperate will that keeps you from loving these things—your own simple self that makes you hate them? Suppose a man in the street should say, "What a shame it is I cannot have a seat in the chapel to hear what this man has to say." And suppose he says, "I hate the preacher; I can't bear his doctrine; but still it's a shame I have not a seat." Would you expect a man to say so? No: you would at once say, "That man does not care for it. Why should he trouble himself about other people having what they value and he despises?" You do not like holiness, you do not like righteousness; if God has elected me to these things, has he hurt you by it? "Ah! but," say some, "I thought it meant that God elected some to heaven and some to hell." That is a very different matter from the gospel doctrine. He has elected men to holiness and to righteousness and through that to heaven. You must not say that he has elected them simply to

heaven, and others only to hell. He has elected you to holiness, if you love holiness. If any of you love to be saved by Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ elected you to be saved. If any of you desire to have salvation, you are elected to have it, if you desire it sincerely and earnestly. But, if you don't desire it, why on earth should you be so preposterously foolish as to grumble because God gives that which you do not like to other people?

II Thus I have tried to say something with regard to the truth of the doctrine of election. And now, briefly, let me say that election is ABSOLUTE: that is, it does not depend upon what we are. The text says, "God hath from the beginning chosen us unto salvation;" but our opponents say that God chooses people because they are good, that he chooses them on account of sundry works which they have done. Now, we ask in reply to this, what works are those on account of which God elects his people? Are they what we commonly call "works of law,"—works of obedience which the creature can render? If so, we reply to you—If men cannot be justified by the works of the law, it seems to us pretty clear that they cannot be elected by the works of the law: if they cannot be justified by their good deeds, they cannot be saved by them. Then the decree of election could not have been formed upon good works. "But," say others, "God elected them on the foresight of their faith." Now, God gives faith, therefore he could not have elected them on account of faith, which he foresaw. There shall be twenty beggars in the street, and I determine to give one of them a shilling; but will any one say that I determined to give that one a shilling, that I elected him to have the shilling, because I foresaw that he would have it? That would be talking nonsense. In like manner to say that God elected men because he foresaw they would have faith, which is salvation in the germ, would be too absurd for us to listen to for a moment. Faith is the gift of God. Every virtue comes from him. Therefore it cannot have caused him to elect men, because it is his gift. Election, we are sure, is absolute, and altogether apart from the virtues which the saints have afterwards. What though a saint should be as holy and devout as Paul; what though he should be as bold as Peter, or as loving as John, yet he would claim nothing from his Maker. I never knew a saint yet of any denomination, who thought that God saved him because he foresaw that he would have these virtues and merits. Now, my brethren, the best jewels that the saint ever wears, if they be jewels of his own fashioning, are not of the first water. There is something of earth mixed with them. The highest grace we ever possess has something of earthliness about it. We feel this when we are most refined, when we are most sanctified, and our language must always be—

"I the chief of sinners am;
Jesus died for me."

Our only hope, our only plea, still hangs on grace as exhibited in the person of Jesus Christ. And I am sure we must utterly reject and disregard all thought that our graces, which are gifts of our Lord, which are his right-hand planting, could have ever caused his love. And we ever must sing—

"What was there in us that could merit esteem
Or give the Creator delight?
'Twas even so Father we ever must sing,
Because it seemed good in thy sight."

"He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy:" he saves because he will save. And if you ask me why he saves me, I can only say, because he would do it. Was there anything in me that should recommend me to God? No; I lay aside everything,

I had nothing to recommend me. When God saved me I was the most abject, lost, and ruined of the race. I lay before him as an infant in my blood. Verily, I had no power to help myself. O how wretched did I feel and know myself to be! If you had something to recommend you to God, I never had. I will be content to be saved by *grace*, unalloyed, pure grace. I can boast of no merits. If you can do so, I cannot. I must sing—

“Free grace alone from the first to the last,
Hath won my affection and held my soul fast.”

III. Then, thirdly, this election is **ETERNAL**. “God hath from the beginning chosen you unto eternal life. Can any man tell me when the beginning was? Years ago we thought the beginning of this world was when Adam came upon it; but we have discovered that thousands of years before that God was preparing chaotic matter to make it a fit abode for man, putting races of creatures upon it, who might die and leave behind the marks of his handiwork and marvellous skill, before he tried his hand on man. But that was not the beginning, for revelation points us to a period long ere this world was fashioned, to the days when the morning stars were begotten; when, like drops of dew, from the fingers of the morning, stars and constellations fell trickling from the hand of God; when, by his own lips, he launched forth ponderous orbs; when with his own hand he sent comets, like thunderbolts, wandering through the sky, to find one day their proper sphere. We go back to years gone by, when worlds were made and systems fashioned, but we have not even approached the beginning yet. Until we go to the time when all the universe slept in the mind of God as yet unborn, until we enter the eternity where God the Creator lived alone, everything sleeping within him, all creation resting in his mighty gigantic thought, we have not guessed the beginning. We may go back, back, back, ages upon ages. We may go back, if we might use such strange words, whole eternities, and yet never arrive at the beginning. Our wing might be tired, our imagination would die away; could it outstrip the lightnings flashing in majesty, power, and rapidity, it would soon weary itself ere it could get to the beginning. But God from the beginning chose his people; when the un navigated ether was yet unfanned by the wing of a single angel, when space was shoreless, or else unborn when universal silence reigned, and not a voice or whisper shocked the solemnity of silence, when there was no being and no motion, no time, and nought but God himself, alone in his eternity; when without the song of an angel, without the attendance of even the cherubim, long ere the living creatures were born, or the wheels of the chariot of Jehovah were fashioned, even then, “in the beginning was the Word,” and in the beginning God’s people were one with the Word, and “in the beginning he chose them into eternal life.” Our election then is eternal. I will not stop to prove it, I only just run over these thoughts for the benefit of young beginners, that they may understand what we mean by eternal, absolute election.

IV. And, next, the election is **PERSONAL**. Here again, our opponents have tried to overthrow election by telling us that it is an election of nations, and not of people. But here the Apostle says, “God hath from the beginning chosen *you*.” It is the most miserable shift on earth to make out that God hath not chosen persons but nations, because the very same objection that lies against the choice of persons, lies against the choice of a nation. If it were not just to choose a person, it would be far more unjust to choose a nation, since nations are but the union of multitudes of persons, and to choose a nation seems to be a more gigantic crime—if election be a crime—than to choose one person. Surely to choose ten thousand would be reckoned to be worse than choosing one; to distinguish a whole nation from the rest of mankind, does seem to be a greater extravaganza in the acts of divine

sovereignty than the election of one poor mortal and leaving out another. But what are nations but men? What are whole peoples but combinations of different units? A nation is made up of that individual, and that, and that. And if you tell me that God chose the Jews, I say then, he chose that Jew, and that Jew, and that Jew. And if you say he chooses Britain, then I say he chooses that British man, and that British man, and that British man. So that is the same thing after all. Election then is personal: it must be so. Every one who reads this text, and others like it, will see that Scripture continually speaks of God's people one by one and speaks of them as having been the special subjects of election.

"Sons we are through God's election,
Who in Jesus Christ believe;
By eternal destination
Sovereign grace we here receive."

We know it is personal election

V. The other thought is—for my time flies too swiftly to enable me to dwell at length upon these points—that election produces GOOD RESULTS. "He hath from the beginning chosen you unto sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth." How many men mistake the doctrine of election altogether! and how my soul burns and boils at the recollection of the terrible evils that have accrued from the spoiling and the wresting of that glorious portion of God's glorious truth! How many are there who have said to themselves, "I am elect," and have sat down in sloth, and worse than that! They have said, "I am the elect of God," and with both hands they have done wickedness. They have swiftly run to every unclean thing, because they have said, "I am the chosen child of God, irrespective of my works, therefore I may live as I list, and do what I like." O, beloved! let me solemnly warn every one of you not to carry the truth too far; or, rather not to turn the truth into error, for we cannot carry it too far. We may overstep the truth; we can make that which was meant to be sweet for our comfort, a terrible mixture for our destruction. I tell you there have been thousands of men who have been ruined by misunderstanding election; who have said, "God has elected me to heaven, and to eternal life;" but they have forgotten that it is written, God has elected them "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." This is God's election—election to sanctification and to faith. God chooses his people to be holy, and to be believers. How many of you here then are believers? How many of my congregation can put their hands upon their hearts and say, "I trust in God that I am sanctified?" Is there one of you who says, "I am elect"—I remind that you swore last week. One of you says, "I trust I am elect"—but I jog your memory about some vicious act that you committed during the last six days. Another of you says, "I am elect"—but I would look you in the face and say, "*Elect!* thou art a most cursed hypocrite! and that is all thou art." Others would say, "I am elect"—but I would remind them that they neglect the mercy-seat and do not pray. Oh, beloved! never think you are elect unless you are holy. You may come to Christ as a sinner, but you may not come to Christ as an elect person until you can see your holiness. Do not misconstrue what I say—do not say "I am elect," and yet think you can be living in sin. That is impossible. The elect of God are holy. They are not pure, they are not perfect, they are not spotless; but, taking their life as a whole, they are holy persons. They are marked, and distinct from others: and no man has a right to conclude himself elect except in his holiness. He may be elect, and yet lying in darkness, but he has no right to believe it; no one can see it, there is no evidence of it. The man may live one day, but he is dead at present. If you are walking in the fear of God, trying to

please him, and to obey his commandments, doubt not that your name has been written in the Lamb's book of life from before the foundation of the world.

And, lest this should be too high for you, note the other mark of election, which is faith, "belief of the truth." Whoever believes God's truth, and believes on Jesus Christ, is elect. I frequently meet with poor souls, who are fretting and worrying themselves about this thought—"How, if I should not be elect?" "Oh, sir," they say, "I know I put my trust in Jesus; I know I believe in his name and trust in his blood; but how if I should not be elect?" Poor dear creature! you do not know much about the gospel, or you would never talk so, for *he that believes is elect*. Those who are elect, are elect unto sanctification and unto faith; and if you have faith you are one of God's elect; you may know it and ought to know it, for it is an absolute certainty. If you, as a sinner, look to Jesus Christ this morning, and say—

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling,"

you are elect. I am not afraid of election frightening poor saints or sinners. There are many divines who tell the enquirer "election has nothing to do with you." That is very bad, because the poor soul is not to be silenced like that. If you could silence him so, it might be well, but he will think of it, he can't help it. Say to him then, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you are elect. If you will cast yourself on Jesus, you are elect. I tell you—the chief of sinners—this morning, I tell you in his name, if you will come to God without any works of your own, cast yourself on the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ; if you will come now and trust in him, you are elect—you were loved of God from before the foundation of the world, for you could not do that unless God had given you the power, and had chosen you to do it. Now you are safe and secure if you do but come and cast yourself on Jesus Christ, and wish to be saved and to be loved by him. But think not that any man will be saved without faith and without holiness. Do not conceive, my hearers, that some decree, passed in the dark ages of eternity, will save your souls, unless you believe in Christ. Do not sit down and fancy that you are to be saved without faith and holiness. That is a most abominable and accursed heresy, and has ruined thousands. Lay not election as a pillow for you to sleep on, or you may be ruined. God forbid that I should be sewing pillows under armholes that you may rest comfortably in your sins. Sinner! there is nothing in the Bible to palliate your sins. But if thou art condemned O man! if thou art lost O woman! thou wilt not find in this Bible one drop to cool thy tongue, or one doctrine to palliate thy guilt; your damnation will be entirely your own fault, and your sin will richly merit it, because ye believe not ye are condemned. "Ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep." Ye wilt not come to me that ye might have life." Do not fancy that election excuses sin—do not dream of it—do not rock yourself in sweet complacency in the thought of your irresponsibility. You are responsible. We must give you both things. We must have divine sovereignty, and we must have man's responsibility. We must have election, but we must ply your hearts, we must send God's truth at you; we must speak to you, and remind you of this, that while it is written, "In me is thy help;" yet it is also written, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself."

VI. Now, lastly, what are the true and legitimate tendencies of right conceptions concerning the doctrine of election. First, I will tell you what the doctrine of election will make saints do under the blessing of God; and, secondly what it will do for sinners if God blesses it to them.

First, I think election, to a saint, is one of the most *stripping* doctrines in all the

world—to take away all trust in the flesh, or all reliance upon anything except Jesus Christ. How often do we wrap ourselves up in our own righteousness, and array ourselves with the false pearls and gems of our own works and doings. We begin to say “Now I shall be saved, because I have this and that evidence.” Instead of that, it is naked faith that saves; that faith and that alone unites to the Lamb, irrespective of works, although it is productive of them. How often do we lean on some work, other than that of our own Beloved, and trust in some might, other than that which comes from on high. Now if we would have this might taken from us, we must consider election. Pause, my soul, and consider this. God loved thee before thou hadst a being. He loved thee when thou wast dead in trespasses and sins, and sent his Son to die for thee. He purchased thee with his precious blood ere thou couldst lisp his name. Canst thou then be proud?

I know nothing, nothing again, that is more *humbling* for us than this doctrine of election. I have sometimes fallen prostrate before it, when endeavouring to understand it. I have stretched my wings, and, eagle-like, I have soared towards the sun. Steady has been my eye, and true my wing, for a season; but, when I came near it, and the one thought possessed me,—“God hath from the beginning chosen you unto salvation,” I was lost in its lustre, I was staggered with the mighty thought; and from the dizzy elevation down came my soul, prostrate and broken, saying, “Lord, I am nothing, I am less than nothing. Why me? Why me?”

Friends, if you want to be humbled, study election, for it will make you humble under the influence of God’s Spirit. He who is proud of his election is not elect; and he who is humbled under a sense of it may believe that he is. He has every reason to believe that he is, for it is one of the most blessed effects of election that it helps us to humble ourselves before God.

Once again. Election in the Christian should make him very *fearless* and very *bold*. No man will be so bold as he who believes that he is elect of God. What cares he for man if he is chosen of his Maker? What will he care for the pitiful chirpings of some tiny sparrows when he knoweth that he is an eagle of a royal race? Will he care when the beggar pointeth at him, when the blood royal of heaven runs in his veins? Will he fear if all the world stand against him? If earth be all in arms abroad, he dwells in perfect peace, for he is in the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High, in the great pavillion of the Almighty. “I am God’s,” says he, “I am distinct from other men. They are of an inferior race. Am not I noble? Am not I one of the aristocrats of heaven? Is not my name written in God’s book?” Does he care for the world? Nay: like the lion that careth not for the barking of the dog, he smileth at all his enemies; and when they come too near him, he moveth himself and dasheth them to pieces. What careth he for them? He walks about them like a colossus; while little men walk under him and understand him not.” His brow is made of iron, his heart is of flint—what doth he care for man? Nay; if one universal hiss came up from the wide world, he would smile at it, for he would say,—

“He that hath made his refuge God,
Shall find a most secure abode.”

“I am one of his elect. I am chosen of God and precious; and though the world cast me out, I fear not. Ah! ye time-serving professors, some of you can bend like the willows. There are few oaken-Christians now-a-days, that can stand the storm; and I will tell you the reason. It is because you do not believe yourselves to be elect. The man who knows he is elect will be too proud to sin; he will not humble himself to commit the acts of common people. The believer in this truth will say,

"I compromise my principles? I change my doctrines? I lay aside my views? I hide what I believe to be true? No! since I know I am one of God's elect, in the very teeth of all men I shall speak God's truth, whatever man may say." Nothing makes a man so truly bold as to feel that he is God's elect. He shall not quiver, he shall not shake, who knows that God has chosen him.

Moreover, election will make us *holy*. Nothing under the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit can make a Christian more holy than the thought that he is chosen. "Shall I sin," he says, "after God hath chosen me? Shall I transgress after such love? Shall I go astray after so much lovingkindness and tender mercy? Nay, my God; since thou hast chosen me, I will love thee; I will live to thee—

‘Since thou, the everlasting God,
My Father art become;’

I will give myself to thee to be thine for ever, by election and by redemption, casting myself on thee, and solemnly consecrating myself to thy service."

And now, lastly, to the ungodly. What says election to you? First, ye ungodly ones, I will excuse you for a moment. There are many of you who do not like election, and I cannot blame you for it, for I have heard those preach election, who have sat down, and said, "I have not one word to say to the sinner." Now, I say you *ought* to dislike such preaching as that, and I do not blame you for it. But, I say, take courage, take hope, O thou sinner, that there is election. So far from dispiriting and discouraging thee, it is a very hopeful and joyous thing that there is an election. What if I told thee perhaps none can be saved, none are ordained to eternal life; wouldst thou not tremble and fold thy hands in hopelessness, and say, "Then how can I be saved, since none are elect?" But, I say, there is a multitude elect, beyond all counting—a host that no mortal can number. Therefore, take heart, thou poor sinner! Cast away thy despondency—mayest thou not be elect as well as any other? for there is a host innumerable chosen. There is joy and comfort for thee! Then, not only take heart, but go and try the Master. Remember, if you were not elect, you would lose nothing by it. What did the four Syrians say? "Let us fall unto the host of the Syrians, for if we stay here we must die, and if we go to them we can but die." O sinner! come to the throne of electing mercy, Thou mayest die where thou art. Go to God; and, even supposing he should spurn thee, suppose his uplifted hand should drive thee away—a thing impossible—yet thou wilt not lose anything; thou wilt not be more damned for that. Besides, supposing thou be damned, thou wouldst have the satisfaction at least of being able to lift up thine eyes in hell, and say, "God, I asked mercy of thee and thou wouldst not grant it; I sought it, but thou didst refuse it." That thou never shalt say, O sinner! If thou goest to him, and askest him, thou shalt receive; for he ne'er has spurned one yet! Is not that hope for you? What though there is an allotted number, yet it is true that all who seek belong to that number. Go thou and seek; and if thou shouldst be the first one to go to hell, tell the devils that thou didst perish thus—tell the demons that thou art a castaway, after having come as a guilty sinner to Jesus. I tell thee it would disgrace the Eternal—with reverence to his name—and he would not allow such a thing. He is jealous of his honour, and he could not allow a sinner to say that.

But ah, poor soul! not only think thus, that thou canst not lose anything by coming; there is yet one more thought—dost thou love the thought of election this morning? Art thou willing to admit its justice? Dost thou say, "I feel that I am lost; I deserve it; and that if my brother is saved I cannot murmur. If God destroy me, I deserve it; but if he saves the person sitting beside me, he has a right to do what he will with his own, and I have lost nothing by it." Can you say that honestly from your heart? If so, then the doctrine of election has had its right effect on your spirit, and you are not far from the kingdom of heaven. You are brought where you ought to be, where the Spirit wants you to be; and being so this morning, depart in peace; God has forgiven your sins. You would not feel that if you were not pardoned; you would not feel that if the Spirit of God were not working in you. Rejoice, then, in this. Let your hope rest on the cross of Christ. Think not on election, but on Christ Jesus. Rest on Jesus—Jesus first, midst, and without end.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE INFALLIBILITY OF GOD'S PURPOSE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST THE 25TH, 1861, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.
Job xxiii. 13.”

It is very advantageous to the Christian mind frequently to consider the deep and unsearchable attributes of God. The beneficial effect is palpable in two ways, exerting a sacred influence both on the judgment and the heart. In respect to the one, it tends to confirm us in those good old orthodox doctrines which lie at the basis of our faith. If we study man, and make him the only object of our research, there will be a strong tendency in our minds to exaggerate his importance. We shall think too much of the creature and too little of the Creator, preferring that knowledge which is to be found out by observation and reason to that divine truth which revelation alone could make known to us. The basis and groundwork of Arminian theology lies in attaching undue importance to man, and giving God rather the second place than the first. Let your mind dwell for a long time upon man as a free agent, upon man as a responsible being, upon man, not so much as being under God's claims as having claims upon God, and you will soon find upspringing in your thoughts a set of crude doctrines, to support which the letter of some few isolated texts in Scripture may be speciously quoted, but which really in spirit are contrary to the whole tenour of the Word of God. Thus your orthodoxy will be shaken to its very foundations, and your soul will be driven out to sea again without peace or joy. Brethren, I am not afraid that any man, who thinks worthily about the Creator, stands in awe of his adorable perfections and sees him sitting upon the throne, doing all things according to the counsel of his will, will go far wrong in his doctrinal sentiments. He may say, “My heart is fixed, O God;” and when the heart is fixed with a firm conviction of the greatness, the omnipotence, the divinity indeed of him whom we call God, the head will not wander far from truth. Another happy result of such meditation is the steady peace, the grateful calm it gives to the soul. Have you been a long time at sea, and has the continual motion of the ship sickened and disturbed you? Have you come to look upon everything as moving till you scarcely put one foot before the other without the fear of falling down because the floor rocks beneath your tread? With what delight do you put your feet at last upon the shore and say, “Ah! this does not move; this is solid ground. What though the tempest howl, this island is safely moored. She will not start from her bearings; when I tread on her she will not yield beneath my feet.” Just so is it with us when we turn from the ever-shifting, often boisterous tide of earthly things to take refuge in the Eternal God who hath been “our dwelling-place in all generations.” The fleeting things of human life, and the fickle thoughts and showy deeds of men, are as moveable and changeable as the waters of the treacherous deep; but when we mount

up, as it were, with eagles' wings to him that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, before whom all its inhabitants are as grasshoppers, we nestle in the Rock of ages, which from its eternal socket never starts, and in its fixed immovability never can be disturbed. Or to use another simile. You have seen little children running round, and round, and round, till they get giddy, and they stand still and hold fast a moment, and everything seems to be flying round about them, but by holding fast and still, and getting into the mind the fact that that to which they hold at least is firm, at last the brain grows still again, and the world ceases to whirl. So you and I have been these six days like little children running round in circles, and everything has been moving with us, till perhaps as we came into this place this morning we felt as if the very promises of God had moved, as if Providence had shifted, our friends had died, our kindred passed away, and we came to look on everything as a floating mass—nothing firm, nothing fixed. Brethren, let us get a good grip to-day of the immutability of God. Let us stand still awhile, and know that the Lord is God. We shall see at length that things do not move as we dreamed they did: "to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heavens." There is still a fixedness in that which seems most fickle. That which appears to be most dreamy has a reality, inasmuch as it is a part of that divinely substantial scheme which God is working out, the end whereof shall be his eternal glory. 'Twill cool your brain, 'twill calm your heart, my brother, 'twill make you go back to the world's fight quiet and composed, 'twill make you stand fast in the day of temptation, if now through divine grace you can come near to God and offer him the tribute of your devotion, who is without variableness or shadow of a turning.

The text will be considered by us this morning—first, as enunciating a great general truth; and, secondly, out of that general truth, we shall fetch another upon which we shall enlarge, I trust, to our comfort.

I. The text may be regarded as TEACHING A GENERAL TRUTH. We will take the first clause of the sentence, "He is in one mind." Now, the fact taught here is, that in all the acts of God in Providence, he has a fixed and a settled purpose. "He is in one mind." It is eminently consolatory to us who are God's creatures, to know that he did not make us without a purpose, and that now in all his dealings with us he has the same wise and gracious end to be served. We suffer; the head aches; the heart leaps with palpitations; the blood creeps sluggishly along where its healthy flow should have been more rapid. We lose our limbs, crushed by accident; some sense fails us; the eye is eclipsed in perpetual night; our mind is racked and disturbed; our fortunes vary; our goods disappear before our eyes; our children, portions of ourselves, sicken and die. Our crosses are as continual as our lives; we are seldom long at ease; we are born to sorrow, and certainly it is an inheritance of which we are never deprived; we suffer continually. Will it not reconcile us to our sorrows, that they serve some end? To be scourged needlessly we consider to be a disgrace, but to be scourged if our country were to be served we should consider an honour, because there is a purpose in it. To suffer the maiming of our bodies, because of some whim of a tyrant, would be a thing hard to bear; but if we minister thereby to the weal of our families, or to the glory of our God, we would be content not to be mutilated once, but to be cut piece-meal away, that so his great purpose might be answered. O believer, ever look, then, on all thy sufferings as being parts of the divine plan, and say, as wave upon wave rolls over thee, "He is in one mind!" He is carrying out still his one great purpose; none of these cometh by chance; none of these happeneth to me out of order, but everything cometh to me according to the purpose of his own will, and answereth the purpose of his own great mind. We have to labour too. How hard do some men labour who have to toil for their daily bread! Their bread is saturated with their sweat; they wear no garment which they have not woven out of their own nerves and muscles. How sternly, too, do others labour, who have with their brain to serve their fellow-men or their God! How have some heroic missionaries spent themselves, and been spent in their fond enterprise! How have many ministers of Christ exhausted not simply the body, but the mind! Their hilarity so natural to them has given place to despondency, and the natural effervescence of their spirits has at last died out into loneliness of soul, through the desperateness of their ardour. Well, and sometimes this labour for God is unrequited. We plough, but the furrow yields no harvest. We sow, but the field refuses the grain, and the devouring bellies of the hungry birds alone are satisfied therewith. We build, but the storm casts down the stones which we had quarried, with Herculean efforts piling one on another. We sweat, we toil, we moil, we fail. How often do we come back weeping because we have toiled, as we think, without success! Yet, Christian man, thou hast not been without success, for "He is still

in one mind." All this was necessary to the fulfilment of his one purpose. Thou art not lost; thy labour has not rotted under the clods. All, though thou seest it not, has been working together towards the desired end. Stand upon the sea-beach for a moment. A wave has just come up careering in its pride. Its crown of froth is spent. As it leaps beyond its fellow, it dies, it dies. And now another, and it dies, and now another, and it dies. Oh! weep not, deep sea, be not thou sorrowful, for though each wave dieth, yet thou prevailest! O thou mighty ocean! onward does the flood advance, till it has covered all the sand and washed the feet of the white cliffs. So is it with God's purpose. You and I are only waves of his great sea; we wash up, we seem to retire, as if there had been no advance; another wave comes, still each wave must retire as though there had been no progress; but the great divine sea of his purpose is still moving on. He is still of one mind and carrying out his plan. How sorrowful it often seems to think how good men die! They learn through the days of their youth, and often before they come to years to use their learning, they are gone. The blade is made and annealed in many a fire, but ere the foeman useth it, it snaps! How many labourers, too, in the Master's vineyard, who when by their experience they were getting more useful than ever, have been taken away just when the Church wanteth them most! He that stood upright in the chariot, guiding the steeds, suddenly falls back, and we cry, "My father, my father, the horsemen of Israel and the chariot thereof!" Still notwithstanding all, we may console ourselves in the midst of our grief with the blessed reflection that everything is a part of God's plan. He is still of one mind: nothing happeneth which is not a part of the divine scheme. To enlarge our thoughts a moment, have you never noticed, in reading history, how nations suddenly decay? When their civilization has advanced so far that we thought it would produce men of the highest mould, suddenly old age begins to wrinkle its brow, its arm grows weak, the sceptre falls, and the crown drops from the head, and we have said, "Is not the world gone back again?" The barbarian has sacked the city, and where once everything was beauty, now there is nothing but ruthless bloodshed and destruction. Ah! but, my brethren, all those things were but the carrying out of the divine plan. Just so you may have seen sometimes upon the hard rock the lichen spring. Soon as the lichen race grows grand, it dies. But wherefore? It is because its death prepares the moss, and the moss which is feeble compared with the lichen growth, at last increases till you see before you the finest specimens of that genus. But the moss decays. Yet weep not for its decaying; its ashes shall prepare a soil for some plants of a little higher growth, and as these decay, one after another, race after race, they at last prepare the soil upon which even the goodly cedar itself might stretch out its roots. So has it been with the race of men—Egypt, and Assyria, Babylon, Greece, and Rome, have crumbled, each and all, when their hour had come, to be succeeded by a better. And if this race of ours should ever be eclipsed, if the Anglo Saxons' boasted pride should yet be stained, even then it will prove to be a link in the divine purpose. Still, in the end, his one mind shall be carried out; his one great result shall be thereby achieved. Not only the decay of nations, but the apparent degeneration of some races of men, and even the total extinction of others, forms a part of the like fixed purpose. In all those cases there may be reasons of sorrow, but faith sees grounds of rejoicing. To gather up all in one, the calamities of earthquake, the devastations of storm, the extirpations of war, and all the terrible catastrophes of plague, have only been co-workers with God—slaves compelled to tug the galley of the divine purpose across the sea of time. From every evil good has come, and the more the evil has accumulated the more hath God glorified himself in bringing out at last his grand, his everlasting design. This, I take it, is the first general lesson of the text—in every event of Providence, God has a purpose. "He is in one mind." Mark, not only a purpose, but only one purpose, for all history is but one. There are many scenes, but it is one drama; there are many pages, but it is one book; there are many leaves, but it is one tree; there are many provinces, yea, and there be lords many, and rulers many; yet is there but one empire, and God the only Potentate. "O come let us worship and bow down before him: for the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods!"

2. "Who can turn him?" This is the second clause of the sentence, and here I think we are taught the doctrine that *the purpose of God is unchanged*. The first sentence shows that he has a purpose, the second shows that it is incapable of change. "Who can turn him?" There are some shallow thinkers who dream that the great plan and design of God was thrown out of order by the fall of man. The fall they

consider as being an accidental circumstance, not intended in the divine plan, and so, God being placed in a delicate predicament of requiring to sacrifice his justice or his mercy, used the plan of the atonement of Christ as a divine expedient. Brethren, it may be lawful to use such terms ; it may be lawful to you, it would not be to me, for well am I persuaded that the very fall of man was a part of the divine purpose—that even the sin of Adam, though he did it freely, was nevertheless contemplated in the divine scheme, and was by no means such a thing as to involve a digression from his primary plan. Then came the deluge, and the race of man was swept away, but God's purpose was not affected by the destruction of the race. In after years his people Israel forsook him and worshipped Baal and Ashtoreth, but his purpose was not changed any more by the defection of his chosen nation than by the destruction of his creatures. And when in after years the gospel was sent to the Jews and they resisted it, and Paul and Peter turned to the Gentiles, do not suppose that God had to take down his book and make an erasure or an amendment. No, the whole was written there from the beginning ; he knew everything of it ; he has never altered a single sentence nor changed a single line of the divine purpose. What he intended the great picture to be, that it shall be at the end ; and where you see some black strokes which seem not in keeping, these shall yet be toned down ; and where there are some brighter dashes, too bright for the sombre picture, these shall yet be brought into harmony ; and when in the end God shall exhibit the whole, he shall elicit both from men and angels tremendous shouts of praise, while they say, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints ! Thou only art holy. All nations shall come and worship before Thee, for thy judgments are made manifest." Where we have thought his government wrong, there shall it prove most right, and where we dreamed he had forgotten to be good, there shall his goodness be most clear. It is a sweet consolation to the mind of one who muses much upon these deep matters, that God never has changed in any degree from his purpose ; and the result will be, notwithstanding everything to the contrary, just precisely in every jot and tittle what he fore-knew and fore-ordained it should be. Now then, wars, ye may rise, and other Alexanders and Cæsars may spring up, but he will not change. Now, nations and peoples, lift up yourselves and let your parliaments pass your decrees, but he changeth not. Now, rebels, foam at the mouth and let your fury boil, but he changeth not for you. Oh ! nations, and peoples, and tongues, and thou round earth, thou speedest on thy orbit still, and all the fury of thine inhabitants cannot make thee move from thy predestinated pathway. Creation is an arrow from the bow of God, and that arrow goes on, straight on, without deviation, to the centre of that target which God ordained that it should strike. Never varied is his plan ; he is without variableness or shadow of a turning. Albert Barnes very justly says, "It is, when properly understood, a matter of unspeakable consolation that God *has* a plan—for who could honor a God who had *no* plan, but who did everything by hap-hazard ? It is matter of rejoicing that he has *one* great purpose which extends through all ages, and embraces all things ; for then everything falls into its proper place, and has its appropriate bearing on other events. It is a matter of joy that God *does* execute all his purposes ; for as they were all good and wise, it is *desirable* that they should be executed. It would be a calamity if a good plan were *not* executed. Why, then, should men murmur at the purposes or the decrees of God ?"

3. The text also teaches a third general truth. While God had a purpose, and that purpose has never changed, the third clause teaches us that *this purpose is sure to be effected*. "What his soul desireth, that he doeth." He made the world out of nothing ; there was no resistance there. "Light be," said he, and light was ; there was no resistance there. "Providence be," said he, and Providence shall be ; and when you shall come to see the end as well as the beginning, you shall find that there was no resistance there. It is a wonderful thing how God effects his purpose while still the creature is free. They who think that predestination and the fulfilment of the divine purpose is contrary to the free-agency of man, know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm. It were no miracle for God to effect his own purpose, if he were dealing with stocks and stones, with granite and with trees ; but this is the miracle of miracles, that the creatures are free, absolutely free, and yet the divine purpose stands ! Herein is wisdom ! This is a deep unsearchable. Man walks without a fetter, yet treads in the very steps which God ordained him to tread in, as certainly as though manacles had bound him to the spot. Man chooses his own seat, selects his own position, guided by his will he chooses sin, or guided by divine grace he chooses the right, and yet in his choice, God sits as sovereign on the

throne; not disturbing, but still over-ruling, and proving himself to be able to deal as well with free creatures as with creatures without freedom, as well able to effect his purpose when he has endowed men with thought, and reason, and judgment, as when he had only to deal with the solid rocks and with the imbedded sea. O Christians! you shall never be able to fathom this, but you may wonder at it. I know there is an easy way of getting out of this great deep, either by denying predestination altogether or by denying free-agency altogether; but if you can hold the two, if you can say, "Yes, my consciousness teaches me that man does as he wills, but my faith teaches me that God does as he wills, and these two are not contrary the one to the other; and yet I cannot tell how it is, I cannot tell how God effects his end; I can only wonder and admire, and say, 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.'" Every creature free and doing as it wills, yet God more free still and doing as he wills, not only in heaven but among the inhabitants of this lower earth. I have thus given you a general subject upon which I would invite you to spend your meditations in your quiet hours, for I am persuaded that sometimes to think of these deep doctrines will be found very profitable. It will be to you like the advice of Christ to Simon Peter:—"Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught." You shall have a draught of exceeding great thoughts and exceeding great graces if you dare to launch out into this exceeding deep sea, and let out the nets of your contemplation at the command of Christ. "Behold, God is great." "O Lord! how great are thy works, and thy thoughts are very deep! A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this."

II. I now come to the second part of my subject, which will be, I trust, cheering to the people of God. From the general doctrine that God has a plan, that this plan is invariable, and that this plan is certain to be carried out, I draw the most precious doctrine that IN SALVATION GOD IS OF ONE MIND,—and who can turn him?—and what his heart desireth, that he doeth. Now, mark, I address myself at this hour only to you who are the people of God. Dost thou believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all thine heart? Is the spirit of adoption given to thee whereby thou canst say, "Abba, Father?" If so, draw nigh, for this truth is for thee.

Come then, my brethren, in the first place let us consider that *God is of one mind*. Of old, my soul, he determined to save thee. Thy calling proves thine election, and thine election teaches thee that God ordained to save thee. He is not a man that he should lie, nor the Son of Man that he should repent. He is of one mind. He saw thee ruined in the fall of thy father Adam, but his mind never changed from his purpose to save thee. He saw thee in thy nativity. Thou wentest astray from the womb speaking lies. Thy youthful follies and disobedience he saw, but never did that gracious mind alter in its designs of love to thee. Then in thy manhood thou didst plunge into vice and sin. Cover, O darkness, all our guilt, and let the night conceal it from our eyes for ever! Though we added sin to sin, and our pride waxed exceeding high and hot, yet he was of one mind.

"Determined to save, he watched o'er my path,
When Satan's blind slave, I sported with death."

At last, when the happy hour arrived, he came to our door and knocked, and he said, "Open to me." And do you remember, O my brother, how we said, "Get thee gone. O Jesu, we want thee not?" We scorned his grace, defied his love, but he was of one mind, and no hardness of heart could turn him. He had determined to have us for his spouse, and he would not take "No" for an answer. He said he would have us, and he persevered. He knocked again, and do you remember how we half opened the door? But then some strong temptation came and we shut it in his very face, and he said, "Open to me, my dove, my head is wet with the dew, and my locks with the drops of the night"—yet he bolted and barred the door, and would not let him in. But he was of one mind and none could turn him. Oh! my soul weeps now when I think of the many convictions that I stifled, of the many movings of his Spirit that I rejected, and those many times when conscience bade me repent, and urged me to flee to him, but I would not; of those seasons when a mother's tears united with all the intercession of the Saviour, yet the heart harder than adamant, and less easy to be melted than the granite itself, refused to move and would not yield. But he was of one mind. He had no fickleness in him. He said he would have us, and have us he would. He had written our names in his book, and he would not cross them out. It was his solemn purpose that yield we should. And O that hour when we yielded at the last! Then

did he prove that in all our wanderings he had been of one mind. And O since then, how sorrowful the reflection! Since then, how often have you and I turned! We have backslidden, and if we had the Arminian's God to deal with, we should either have been in hell, or out of the covenant at this hour. I know I should be in the covenant and out of the covenant a hundred times a day if I had a God who put me out every time I sinned and then restored it when I repented. But no, despite our sin, our unbelief, our backslidings, our forgetfulness of him, he was of one mind. And, brethren, I know this, that though we shall wander still, though in dark hours you and I may slip, and often fall, yet his lovingkindness changes not. Thy strong arm, O God, shall bear us on; thy loving heart will never fail; thou wilt not turn thy love away from us, or make it cease, or pour upon us thy fierce anger; but having begun, thou wilt complete the triumphs of thy grace. Nothing shall make thee change thy mind. What joy is this to you, believers! for your mind changes every day; your experience varies like the wind, and if salvation were to be the result of any purpose on your part, certainly it never would be effected. But since it is God's work to save, and we have proved hitherto that he is of one mind, our faith shall revel in the thought that he will be of one thought even to the end, till all on glory's summit we shall sing of that fixed purpose and that immutable love which never turned aside until the deed of grace was triumphantly achieved.

Now, believer, listen to the second lesson: "*Who can turn him?*" While he is immutable from within, he is immovable from without. "*Who can turn him?*" That is a splendid picture presented to us by Moses in the Book of Numbers. The children of Israel were encamped in the plains of Moab. As the trees of lign aloes which the Lord had planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters, were their tents. Quietly and calmly they were resting in the valley—the tabernacle of the Lord in their midst, and the pillar of cloud spread over them as a shield. But on the mountain range there were two men—Balak, the son of Zippor, king of the Moabites, and Balaam the prophet of Pethor. They had builded seven altars and offered seven bullocks; and Balak said unto Balaam, "Come, curse me Jacob, come, defy Israel." Four times did the prophet take up his parable. Four times did he use his enchantments, offering the sacrifices of God on the altars of Baal. Four times did he vainly attempt a false divination. But I would have you mark that in each succeeding vision the mind of God is brought out in deeper characters. First, he confesses his own impotence, "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed, how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied?" Then the second oracle brings out more distinctly the divine blessing. "Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it." A third audacious attempt is met with a heavier repulse; for the stifled curse recoils on themselves—"Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee." Once again in the vision that closes the picture, the eyes of Balaam are opened till he gets a glimpse of the Star that should come out of Jacob, and the Sceptre that shall rise out of Israel, with the dawning glory of the latter days. Well might Balaam say, "There is no enchantment against Jacob, no divination against Israel. And now transfer that picture in your mind to all your enemies, and specially to that arch-fiend of hell. He comes before God to-day with the remembrance of your sins, and he desires that he may curse Israel, but he has found a hundred times that there is no enchantment against Jacob nor divination against Israel. He took David into the sin of lust, and he found that God would not curse him there, but bless him with a sorrowful chastisement and with a deep repentance. He took Peter into the sin of denying his Master, and he denied him with oaths and curses. But the Lord would not curse him even there, but turned and looked on Peter, not with a lightning glance that might have shivered him, but with a look of love that made him weep bitterly. He has taken you and me at divers times into positions of unbelief, and we have doubted God. Satan said—"Surely, surely God will curse him there," but never once has he done it. He has smitten, but the blow was full of love. He has chastised, but the chastisement was fraught with mercy. He has not cursed us, nor will he. Thou canst not turn God's mind, then, fiend of hell; thine enchantments cannot prosper, thine accusations shall not prevail. "He is in one mind, who can turn him?" And brethren, you know when men are turned, they are sometimes turned by advice. Now who can advise with God? Who shall counsel the Most High to cast off the darlings of his bosom, or persuade the Saviour to reject his spouse? Such counsel offered were blasphemy, and it would be repugnant to his soul. Or else men are turned by entreaties. But how shall God listen to the entreaties of the evil one? Are not the prayers of the wicked an abomination to the Lord? Let them pray against us, let them entreat the Lord to curse us. But he is of

one mind, and no revengeful prayer should change the purpose of his love. Sometimes men are changed by the ties of relationship: a mother interposes and love yields, but in our case, who can interpose? God's only begotten Son is as much concerned in our salvation as his Father, and instead of interposing to change, he would—if such a thing were needed—still continue to plead that the love and mercy of God might never be withdrawn. Oh, let us rejoice in this,—

“Midst all our sin, and care, and woe,
His Spirit will not let us go.”

The Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people. “He is in one mind, and who can turn him?”

I know not how it is, but I feel that I cannot preach from this text as I should like. But oh! the text itself is music to my ears. It seems to sound like the martial trumpet of the battle, and my soul is ready for the fray. It seems now that if trials and troubles should come, if I could but hold my hand upon this precious text, I would laugh at them all. “Who can turn him?”—I would shout—“Who can turn him?” Come on, earth and hell; come on, for “who can turn him?” Come on, ye boisterous troubles, come on, ye innumerable temptations, come on, slanderer and liar, “who can turn him?” And since he cannot be changed, my soul must and will rejoice “with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” I wish I could throw the text like a bomb-shell into the midst of the army of doubters, that that army might be routed at once; for when we get a text like this, it must be the text which takes effect, and not our explanation. This surely is a most marvellous death-blow to our doubts and fears. “He is in one mind, and who can turn him?”

And now with a few words upon the last sentence I shall conclude:—*God's purpose must be effected*—“What his soul desireth, that he doeth.” Beloved, what God's soul desireth is your salvation and mine, if we be his chosen. Well, that he doeth. Part of that salvation consists in our perfect sanctification. We have had a long struggle with inbred sin, and as far as we can judge, we have not made much progress, for still is the Philistine in the land, and still doth the Canaanite invade us. We sin still, and our hearts still have in them unbelief and proneness to depart from the living God. Can you think it possible that you will ever be without any tendency to sin? Does it not seem a dream that *you* should ever be without fault before the throne of God—without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing? But yet you shall be; his heart desireth it, and that he doeth. He would have his spouse without any defilement; he would have his chosen generation without anything to mar their perfection. Now, inasmuch as he spake and it was one, he has but to speak and it shall be done with you. You cannot rout your foes, at he can. You cannot overcome your besetting sins, but he can do it. You cannot drive out your corruptions, for they have chariots of iron, but he will drive out the last of them, till the whole land shall be without one enemy to disturb its perpetual peace. O what a joy to know that it will be ere long! Oh! it will be so soon with some of us—such a few weeks, though we perhaps are reckoning on years of life! A few weeks, or a few days, and we shall have passed through Jordan's flood and stand complete in him, accepted in the Beloved! And should it be many years—should we be spared till the snows of a century shall have fallen upon our frosted hair—yet even then we must not doubt that his purpose shall at last be fulfilled. We shall be spotless and faultless, and unblameable in his sight ere long.

Another part of our salvation is, that we should at last be without pain, without sorrow, gathered with the Church of the first-born before the Father's face. Does it not seem, when you sit down to think of yourself as being in heaven, as a pretty dream that never will be true? What! shall these fingers one day smite the strings of a golden harp? O aching head! shalt thou one day wear a crown of glory that fadeth not away? O toil-worn body! shalt thou bathe thyself in seas of heavenly rest? Is not heaven too good for us, brothers and sisters? Can it be that we, poor we, shall ever get inside those pearly gates, or tread the golden streets? Oh! shall we ever see his face? Will he ever kiss us with the kisses of his lips? Will the King immortal, invisible, the only wise God, our Saviour, take us to his bosom, and call us all his own? Oh! shall we ever drink out of the rivers of pleasure that are at the right hand of the Most High? Shall we be among that happy company who shall be led to the living fountains of waters, and all tears be wiped away from our eyes? Ah! that we shall be! for “he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, that he doeth.” “Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my

glory." That is an immortal and omnipotent desire. We shall be with him where he is ; his purpose shall be effected, and we shall partake of his bliss. Now rise, ye who love the Saviour, and put your trust in him—rise like men who have God within you, and sit no longer down upon your dunghills. Come, ye desponding ones ; if salvation were to be your own work, ye might despair, but since it is his, and he changes not, you must not even doubt.

“ Now let the feeble all be strong,
And make Jehovah's power their song ;
His shield is spread o'er every saint,
And thus supported, who can faint ? ”

If you perish—even the weakest of you—God's purpose cannot be effected. If you fall, his honour will be stained. If you perish, heaven itself will be dishonoured ; Christ will have lost one of his members ; the Divine Husband will be disappointed in part of his well-beloved spouse ; he will be a king whose regalia has been stolen ; nay, he will not be complete himself, for the Church is his fulness, and how can he be full if a part of his fulness shall be cast away ? Putting these things together, let us take courage, and in the name of God let us set up our banners. He that has been with us hitherto preserve us to the end, and we shall soon sing in the fruition of glory as we now recite in the confidence of faith, that his purpose is completed, and his love immutable.

This I say by way of close. Such a subject ought to inspire every man with awe. I speak to some here who are unconverted. It is an awful thought ; God's purpose will be subverted in you. You may hate him, but as he gat him honour upon Pharaoh and all his hosts, so will he upon you. You may think that you will spoil his designs : that shall be your idea, but your very acts, though guided with that intent, shall only tend to subserve his glory. Think of that ! To rebel against God is useless, for you cannot prevail. To resist him is not only impertinence but folly. He will be as much glorified by you, whichever way you go. You shall either yield him willing honour or unwilling honour, but either way his purpose in you shall most certainly be subverted. O that this thought might make you bow your heads and say, “ Great God, glorify thy mercy in me, for I have revolted ; show that thou canst forgive. I have sinned, deeply sinned. Prove the depths of thy mercy by pardoning me. I know that Jesus died, and that he is set forth as a propitiator ; I believe on him as such. O God ! I trust him ; I pray thee, glorify thyself in me by showing what thy grace can do in casting sin behind thy back, and blotting out iniquity, transgression, and sin.” Sinner, he will do it ; he will do it, if thus you plead and thus you pray, he will do it, for there was never a sinner rejected yet, that came to God with humble prayer and faith. Going to God to-day, confessing your sin, and taking hold of Christ, as upon the horns of the altar of mercy, and of sacrifice, you shall find that it was a part of the divine plan to bring you here to-day, to strike your mind with awe, to lead you humbly to the cross, to lead you afterwards joyfully to your God, and to bring you perfect at last before his throne.

God add his blessing for Christ's sake ! Amen.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

JACOB AND ESAU.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, JANUARY 16TH, 1859, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."—Romans ix. 13.

Do not imagine for an instant that I pretend to be able thoroughly to elucidate the great mysteries of predestination. There are some men who claim to know all about the matter. They twist it round their fingers as easily as if it were an everyday thing; but depend upon it, he who thinks he knows all about this mystery, knows but very little. It is but the shallowness of his mind that permits him to see the bottom of his knowledge; he who dives deep, finds that there is in the lowest depth to which he can attain a deeper depth still. The fact is, that the great questions about man's responsibility, free-will, and predestination, have been fought over, and over, and over again, and have been answered in ten thousand different ways; and the result has been, that we know just as much about the matter as when we first began. The combatants have thrown dust into each other's eyes, and have hindered each other from seeing, and then they have concluded, that because they put other people's eyes out, they could therefore see.

Now, it is one thing to refute another man's doctrine, but a very different matter to establish my own views. It is very easy to knock over one man's hypothesis concerning these truths, not quite so easy to make my own stand on a firm footing. I shall try to-night, if I can, to go safely, if I do not go very fast; for I shall endeavour to keep simply to the letter of God's Word. I think that if we kept more simply to the teachings of the Bible, we should be wiser than we are; for by turning from the heavenly light of revelation, and trusting to the deceitful will-o'-the-wisps of our own imagination, we thrust ourselves into quags and bogs where there is no sure footing, and we begin to sink; and instead of making progress, we find ourselves sticking fast. The truth is, neither you nor I have any right to want to know more about predestination than what God tells us. That is enough for us. If it were worth while for us to know more, God would have revealed more. What God has told us, we are to believe, but to the knowledge thus gained, we are too apt to add our own vague notions, and then we are sure to go wrong. It would be better, if in all controversies, men had simply stood hard and fast by "Thus saith the Lord," instead of having it said, "Thus and thus I think." I shall now endeavour, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to throw the light of God's Word upon this great doctrine of divine sovereignty, and give you what I think to be a Scriptural statement of the fact, that some men are chosen, other men are left,—the great fact that is declared in this text,—“Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”

It is a terrible text, and I will be honest with it if I can. One man says the word “hate” does not mean hate; it means “love less.”—“Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I loved less.” It may be so; but I don't believe it is. At any rate, it says “hate” here; and until you give me another version of the Bible, I shall keep to this one. I believe that the term is correctly and properly translated; that the word “hate” is not stronger than the original; but even if it be a little stronger, it is nearer the mark than the other translation which is offered to us in those meaningless words, “love less.” I like to take it and let it stand just as it is. The fact is, God loved Jacob, and he did not love Esau; he did choose Jacob, but he did not choose Esau; he did bless Jacob, but he never blessed Esau; his mercy followed Jacob all the way of his life, even to the last, but his mercy never followed Esau;

he permitted him still to go on in his sins, and to prove that dreadful truth, "Esau have I hated." Others, in order to get rid of this ugly text, say, it does not mean Esau and Jacob; it means the nation; it means Jacob's children and Esau's children; it means the children of Israel and Edom. I should like to know where the difference lies. Is the difficulty removed by extending it? Some of the Wesleyan brethren say, that there is a national election; God has chosen one nation and not another. They turn round and tell us it is unjust in God to choose one man and not another. Now, we ask them by everything reasonable, is it not equally unjust of God to choose one nation and leave another? The argument which they imagine overthrows us overthrows them also. There never was a more foolish subterfuge than that of trying to bring out national election. What is the election of a nation but the election of so many *units*, of so many people? and it is tantamount to the same thing as the particular election of individuals. In thinking, men cannot see clearly that if—which we do not for a moment believe—that if there be any injustice in God choosing one man and not another, how much more must there be injustice in his choosing one nation and not another. No! the difficulty cannot be got rid of thus, but is greatly increased by this foolish wresting of God's Word. Besides, here is the proof that that is not correct; read the verse preceding it. It does not say anything at all about nations, it says, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth: It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger;"—referring to the children, not to the nations. Of course the threatening was afterwards fulfilled in the position of the two nations; Edom was made to serve Israel. But this text means just what it says; it does not mean nations, but it means the persons mentioned. "Jacob,"—that is the man whose name was Jacob—"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Take care, my dear friends, how any of you meddle with God's Word. I have heard of folks altering passages they did not like. It will not do, you know, you cannot alter them; they are really just the same. Our only power with the Word of God is simply to let it stand as it is, and to endeavour by God's grace to accommodate ourselves to that. We must never try to make the Bible bow to us, in fact we cannot, for the truths of divine revelation are as sure and fast as the throne of God. If a man wants to enjoy a delightful prospect, and a mighty mountain lies in his path, does he commence cutting away at its base, in the vain hope that ultimately it will become a level plain before him? No, on the contrary, he diligently uses it for the accomplishment of his purpose by ascending it, well knowing this to be the only means of obtaining the end in view. So must we do; we cannot bring down the truths of God to our poor finite understandings; the mountain will never fall before us, but we can seek strength to rise higher and higher in our perception of divine things, and in this way only may we hope to obtain the blessing.

Now, I shall have two things to notice to-night. I have explained this text to mean just what it says, and I do not want it to be altered—"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." To take off the edge of this terrible doctrine that makes some people bite their lips so, I must just notice that *this is a fact*; and, after that, I shall try to answer the question,—*Why was it that God loved Jacob and hated Esau?*

I. First, then, **THIS IS A FACT.** Men say they do not like the doctrine of election. Verily, I do not want them to; but is it not a fact that God has elected some? Ask an Arminian brother about election, and at once his eye turns fiercely upon you, and he begins to get angry, he can't bear it; it is a horrible thing, like a war-cry to him, and he begins to sharpen the knife of controversy at once. But say to him, "Ah, brother! was it not divine grace that made you to differ? Was it not the Lord who called you out of your natural state, and made you what you are?" "Oh, yes," he says, "I quite agree with you there." Now, put this question to him: "What do you think is the reason why one man has been converted, and not another?" "Oh," he says, "the Spirit of God has been at work in this man." Well, then, my brother, the fact is that God *does* treat one man better than another; and is there anything wonderful in this fact? It is a fact we recognize every day. There is a man up in the gallery there, that work as hard as he likes, he cannot earn more than fifteen shillings a week; and here is another man that gets a thousand a year; what is the reason of this? One is born in the palaces of kings, while another draws his first breath in a roofless hovel. What is the reason of this? God's providence. He puts one man in one position, and another man in another. Here is a man whose head cannot hold two thoughts together, do what you will with him; here is another who can sit down and write a book, and dive

into the deepest of questions; what is the reason of it? God has done it. Do you not see the fact, that God does not treat every man alike? He has made some eagles, and some worms; some he has made lions, and some creeping lizards; he has made some men kings, and some are born beggars. Some are born with gigantic minds, and some verge on the idiot. Why is this? Do you murmur at God for it? No, you say it is a fact, and there is no good in murmuring. What is the use of kicking against facts? It is only kicking against the pricks with naked feet, and you hurt yourself and not them. Well, then, election is a positive fact; it is as clear as daylight, that God does, in matters of religion, give to one man more than to another. He gives to me opportunities of hearing the word, which he does not give to the Hottentot. He gives to me, parents who, from infancy, trained me in the fear of the Lord. He does not give that to many of you. He places me afterwards in situations where I am restrained from sin. Other men are cast into places where their sinful passions are developed. He gives to one man a temper and disposition which keeps him back from some lust, and to another man he gives such impetuosity of spirit, and depravity turns that impetuosity so much aside, that the man runs headlong into sin. Again, he brings one man under the sound of a powerful ministry, while another sits and listens to a preacher whose drowsiness is only exceeded by that of his hearers. And even when they are hearing the gospel, the fact is God works in one heart when he does not in another. Though, I believe to a degree, the Spirit works in the hearts of all who hear the Word, so that they are all without excuse, yet I am sure he works in some so powerfully, that they can no longer resist him, but are constrained by his grace to cast themselves at his feet, and confess him Lord of all; while others resist the grace that comes into their hearts; and it does not act with the same irresistible force that it does in the other case, and they perish in their sins, deservedly and justly condemned. Are not these things facts? Does any man deny them? *can* any man deny them? What is the use of kicking against facts? I always like to know when there is a discussion, what is the fact. You have heard the story of King Charles the Second and the philosophers—King Charles asked one of them, "What is the reason why, if you had a pail of water, and weighed it, and then put a fish into it, that the weight would be the same?" They gave a great many elaborate reasons for this. At last one of them said, "Is it the fact?" And then they found out that the water did weigh more, just as much more as the fish put into it. So all their learned arguments fell to the ground. So, when we are talking about election, the best thing is to say, "Put aside the doctrine for a moment, let us see what is the fact?" We walk abroad; we open our eyes; we see, there is the fact. What, then, is the use of our discussing any longer? We had better believe it, since it is an undeniable truth. You may alter an opinion, but you cannot alter a fact. You may change a mere doctrine, but you cannot possibly change a thing which actually exists. There it is—God does certainly deal with some men better than he does with others. I will not offer an apology for God; he can explain his own dealings; he needs no defence from me,

"God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain;"

but there stands the fact. Before you begin to argue upon the doctrine, just recollect, that whatever you may think about it, you cannot alter it; and however much you may object to it, it is actually true that God did love Jacob, and did not love Esau.

For now look at Jacob's life and read his history; you are compelled to say that, from the first hour that he left his father's house, even to the last, God loved him. Why, he has not gone far from his father's house before he is weary, and he lies down with a stone for his pillow, and the hedges for his curtain, and the sky for his canopy; and he goes to sleep, and God comes and talks to him in his sleep; he sees a ladder, whereof the top reaches to heaven, and a company of angels ascending and descending upon it; and he goes on his journey to Laban. Laban tries to cheat him, and as often as Laban tries to wrong him, God suffers it not, but multiplies the different cattle that Laban gives him. Afterwards, you remember, when he fled unawares from Laban, and was pursued, that God appears to Laban in a dream, and charges him not to speak to Jacob either good or bad. And more memorable still, when his sons Levi and Simeon have committed murder

in Shechem, and Jacob is afraid that he will be overtaken and destroyed by the inhabitants who were rising against him, God puts a fear upon the people, and says to them, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophet no harm." And when a famine comes over the land, God has sent Joseph into Egypt, to provide corn in Goshen for his brethren, that they should live and not die. And see the happy end of Jacob—"I shall see my son Joseph before I die." Behold the tears streaming down his aged cheeks, as he clasps his own Joseph to his bosom! See how magnificently he goes into the presence of Pharaoh, and blesses him. It is said, "Jacob blessed Pharaoh." He had God's love so much in him, that he was free to bless the mightiest monarch of his times. At last he gave up the ghost, and it was said at once, "This was a man that God loved." There is the fact that God did love Jacob.

On the other hand, there is the fact that God did not love Esau. He permitted Esau to become the father of princes, but he has not blessed his generation. Where is the house of Esau now? Edom has perished. She built her chambers in the rock, and cut out her cities in the flinty rock; but God has abandoned the inhabitants thereof, and Edom is not to be found. They became the bond-slaves of Israel; and the kings of Edom had to furnish a yearly tribute of wool to Solomon and his successors; and now the name of Esau is erased from the book of history. Now, then, I must say, again, this ought to take off at least some of the bitterness of controversy, when we recollect that it is the fact, let men say what they will, that God did love Jacob, and he did not love Esau.

II. But now the second point of my subject is, *WHY IS THIS?* Why did God love Jacob? why did he hate Esau? Now, I am not going to undertake too much at once. You say to me, "Why did God love Jacob? and why did he hate Esau?" We will take one question at a time; for the reason why some people get into a muddle in theology is, because they try to give an answer to two questions. Now, I shall not do that; I will tell you one thing at a time. I will tell you why God loved Jacob; and, then, I will tell you why he hated Esau. But I cannot give you the same reason for two contradictory things. That is wherein a great many have failed. They have sat down and seen these facts, that God loved Jacob and hated Esau, that God has an elect people, and that there are others who are not elect. If, then, they try to give the same reason for election and non-election, they make sad work of it. If they will pause and take one thing at a time, and look to God's Word, they will not go wrong.

The first question is, *why did God love Jacob?* I am not at all puzzled to answer this, because when I turn to the Word of God, I read this text;—"Not for your sakes, do I this saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways O house of Israel." I am not at a loss to tell you that it could not be for any good thing in Jacob, that God loved him, because I am told that "the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth." I can tell you the reason why God loved Jacob; *It is sovereign grace.* There was nothing in Jacob that could make God love him; there was everything about him, that might have made God hate him, as much as he did Esau, and a great deal more. But it was because God was infinitely gracious, that he loved Jacob, and because he was sovereign in his dispensation of this grace, that he chose Jacob to the object of that love. Now, I am not going to deal with Esau, until I have answered the question on the side of Jacob. I want just to notice this, that Jacob was loved of God, simply on the footing of free grace. For, come now, let us look at Jacob's character; I have already said in the exposition, what I think of him. I do think the very smallest things of Jacob's character. As a natural man, he was always a bargain-maker.

I was struck the other day with that vision that Jacob had at Bethel: it seemed to me a most extraordinary development of Jacob's bargain-making spirit. You know he lay down, and God was pleased to open the doors of heaven to him, so that he saw God sitting at the top of the ladder, and the angels ascending and descending upon it. What do you suppose he said as soon as he awoke? Well, he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Why, if Jacob had had faith, he would not have been afraid of God: on the contrary, he would have rejoiced that God had thus permitted him to hold fellowship with him. Now, hear Jacob's bargain. God had simply said to him, "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac:

the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed." He did not say anything about what Jacob was to do: God only said, "I will do it,"—"Behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Now, can you believe, that after God had spoken face to face with Jacob, that he would have had the impudence to try and make a bargain with God? But he did. He begins and says, "*If*—" There now, the man has had a vision, and an absolute promise from God, and yet he begins with an "*If*." That is bargain-making with a vengeance! "*If* God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my Father's house in peace, *then*"—not without—mark, he is going to hold God to his bargain—"then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee." I marvel at this! If I did not know something about my own nature, I should be utterly unable to understand it. What! a man that has talked with God, then begin to make a bargain with him! that has seen the only way of access between heaven and earth, the ladder Christ Jesus, and has had a covenant made between himself and God, a covenant that is all on God's part—all a promise—and yet wants after that to hold God to the bargain: as if he were afraid God would break his promise! Oh! this was vile indeed!

Then notice his whole life. While he lived with Laban, what miserable work it was. He had got into the hands of a man of the world; and whenever a covetous Christian gets into such company, a terrible scene ensues! There are the two together, greedy and grasping. If an angel could look down upon them, how would he weep to see the man of God fallen from his high place, and become as bad as the other. Then, the device that Jacob used, when he endeavoured to get his wages was most extraordinary. Why did he not leave it to God, instead of adopting such systems as that? The whole way through we are ashamed of Jacob; we cannot help it. And then, there is that grand period in his life, the turning point, when we are told, that "Jacob wrestled with God, and prevailed." We will look at that—I have carefully studied the subject, and I do not think so much of him as I did. I thought Jacob wrestled with God, but I find it is the contrary; he did not wrestle with God; God wrestled with him. I had always set Jacob up, in my mind, as the very model of a man wrestling in prayer; I do not think so now. He divided his family, and put a person in front to appease Esau. He did not go in front himself, with the holy trust that a patriarch should have felt; guarded with all the omnipotence of heaven, he might boldly have gone to meet his brother, but no! he did not feel certain that the latter would bow at his feet, although the promise said, "The elder shall serve the younger." He did not rest on that promise; it was not big enough for him. Then he went at night to the brook Jabbok. I do not know what for, unless he went to pray; but I am afraid it was not so. The text says, "And Jacob was left alone: and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." There is a great deal of difference between a man wrestling with me, and my wrestling with him. When I strive with anyone, I want to gain something from him, and when a man wrestles with me, he wants to get something out of me. Therefore, I take it, when the man wrestled with Jacob, he wanted to get his cunning and deceit out of him, and prove what a poor sinful creature he was, but he could not do it. Jacob's craft was so strong, that he could not be overcome; at last, the angel touched his thigh, and showed him his own hollowness. And Jacob turned round and said, "Thou hast taken away my strength, now I will wrestle with *thee*;" and when his thigh was out of joint, when he fully felt his own weakness, then, and not till then, is he brought to say, "I will not let *thee* go, except thou bless me." He had had full confidence in his own strength, but God at last humbled him, and when all his boasted power was gone, then it was that Jacob became a prevailing prince. But, even after that, his life is not clear. Then you find him an unbelieving creature; and we have all been as bad. Though we are blaming Jacob, brethren, we blame ourselves. We are hard with him, but we shall be harder with ourselves. Do you not remember the memorable speech of the patriarch, when he said, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me?" Ah, Jacob, why cannot you believe the promise? All other promises have been fulfilled. But no! he could not think of the promise; he was always wanting to live by sight.

Now, I say if the character of Jacob, be as I have described it, and I am sure it

is—we have got it in God's word—there was, there could have been nothing in Jacob, that made God love him; and the only reason why God loved him must have been because of his own grace, because "he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy." And rest assured, the only reason why any of us can hope to be saved is this, the sovereign grace of God. There is no reason why I should be saved, or why you should be saved, but God's own merciful heart, and God's own omnipotent will. Now that is the doctrine; it is taught not only in this passage, but in multitudes of other passages of God's Word. Dear friends, receive it, hold fast by it, and never let it go.

Now, the next question is a different one: *Why did God hate Esau?* I am not going to mix this question up with the other, they are entirely distinct, and I intend to keep them so, one answer will not do for two questions, they must be taken separately, and then can be answered satisfactorily. Why does God hate any man? I defy anyone to give any answer but this, because that man deserves it; no reply but that can ever be true. There are some who answer, divine sovereignty; but I challenge them to look that doctrine in the face. Do you believe that God created man and arbitrarily, sovereignly—it is the same thing—created that man, with no other intention, than that of damning him? Made him, and yet, for no other reason than that of destroying him for ever? Well, if you can believe it, I pity you, that is all I can say: you deserve pity, that you should think so meanly of God, whose mercy endureth for ever. You are quite right when you say the reason why God loves a man, is because God does so; there is no reason in the man. But do not give the same answer as to why God hates a man. If God deals with any man severely, it is because that man deserves all he gets. In hell there will not be a solitary soul that will say to God, O Lord, thou hast treated me worse than I deserve! But every lost spirit will be made to feel that he has got his deserts, that his destruction lies at his own door and not at the door of God; that God had nothing to do with his condemnation, except as the Judge condemns the criminal, but that he himself brought damnation upon his own head, as the result of his own evil works. Justice is that which damns a man; it is mercy, it is free grace, that saves; sovereignty holds the scale of love; it is justice holds the other scale. Who can put that into the hand of sovereignty? That were to libel God and to dishonour him.

Now, let us look at Esau's character, says one, "did he deserve that God should cast him away?" I answer, he did. What we know of Esau's character, clearly proves it. Esau lost his birthright. Do not sit down and weep about that, and blame God. Esau sold it himself; he sold it for a mess of pottage. Oh, Esau, it is in vain for thee to say, "I lost my birthright by decree." No, no. Jacob got it by decree, but you lost it because you sold it yourself—didn't you? Was it not your own bargain? Did you not take the mess of red pottage of your own voluntary will, in lieu of the birthright? Your destruction lies at your own door, because you sold your own soul at your own bargain, and you did it yourself. Did God influence Esau to do that? God forbid, God is not the author of sin. Esau voluntarily gave up his own birthright. And the doctrine is, that every man who loses heaven gives it up himself. Every man who loses everlasting life rejects it himself. God denies it not to him—he will not come that he may have life. Why is it that a man remains ungodly and does not fear God? It is because he says, "I like this drink, I like this pleasure, I like this sabbath-breaking, better than I do the things of God." No man is saved by his own free-will, but every man is damned by it that is damned. He does it of his own will; no one constrains him. You know, sinner, that when you go away from here, and put down the cries of conscience, that you do it yourself. You know that, when after a sermon you say, "I do not care about believing in Christ," you say it yourself—You are quite conscious of it, and if not conscious of it, it is notwithstanding a dreadful fact, that the reason why you are what you are, is because you *will* to be what you are. It is your own will that keeps you where you are, the blame lies at your own door, your being still in a state of sin is voluntary. You are a captive, but you are a voluntary captive. You will never be willing to get free until God makes you willing. But you are willing to be a bond slave. There is no disguising the fact, that man loves sin, loves evil, and does not love God. You know, though heaven is preached to you through the blood of Christ, and though hell is threatened to you as the result of your sins, that still you cleave to your iniquities; you will not leave them, and will not fly to Christ. And when you are cast away, at last it will be said of you, "you have lost your birthright." But you

sold it yourself. You know that the ball-room suits you better than the house of God; you know that the pot-house suits you better than the prayer-meeting; you know you trust yourself rather than trust Christ; you know you prefer the joys of the present time to the joys of the future. It is your own choice—keep it. Your damnation is your own election, not God's; you richly deserve it.

But, says one, "Esau repented." Yes, he did, but what sort of a repentance was it? Did you ever notice his repentance? Every man who repents and believes will be saved. But what sort of a repentance was his? As soon as he found that his brother had got the birthright, he sought it again with repentance; he sought it with tears, but he did not get it back. You know he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage; and he thought he would buy it back by giving his father a mess of pottage. "There," he says, "I will go and hunt venison for my father. I have got over him with my savoury meat, and he will readily give me my birthright again." That is what sinners say: "I have lost heaven by my evil works; I will easily get it again by reforming. Did I not lose it by sin? I will get it back by giving up my sins." "I have been a drunkard," says one, "I will give up drinking, and I will now be a teetotaler." Another says, "I have been an awful swearer; I am very sorry for it, indeed; I will not swear any more." So all he gives to his father is a mess of pottage, the same as that for which he sold it. No, sinner, you may sell heaven for a few carnal pleasures, but you cannot buy heaven by merely giving them up. You can get heaven only on another ground, viz., the ground of free-grace. You lose your soul justly, but you cannot get it back by good works, or by the renunciation of your sins.

You think that Esau was a sincere penitent. Just let me tell you another thing. This blessed penitent, when he failed to get the blessing, what did he say? "The days of mourning for my father are at hand: then will I slay my brother Jacob." There is a penitent for you. That is not the repentance that comes from God the Holy Spirit. But there are some men like that. They say they are very sorry they should have been such sinners as that, very sorry that they should have been brought into such a sad condition as that; and then they go and do the same that they did before. Their penitence does not bring them out of their sin, but it leaves them in it, and, perhaps, plunges them still deeper into guilt. Now, look at the character of Esau. The only redeeming trait in it was that he did begin with repentance, but that repentance was even an aggravation of his sin, because it was without the effects of evangelical repentance. And I say, if Esau sold his birthright he did deserve to lose it; and, therefore, am I not right in saying, that if God hated Esau, it was because he deserved to be hated. Do you observe how Scripture always guards this conclusion? Turn to the ninth chapter of Romans, where we have selected our text, see how careful the Holy Spirit is here, in the 22nd verse. "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory." But it does not say anything about *fitting* men for destruction; they fitted themselves. *They* did that: God had nothing to do with it. But when men are saved, God fits them for that. All the glory to God in salvation; all the blame to men in damnation.

If any of you want to know what I preach every day, and any stranger should say, "Give me a summary of his doctrine," say this, "He preaches salvation all of grace, and damnation all of sin. He gives God all the glory for every soul that is saved, but he won't have it that God is to blame for any man that is damned." That teaching I cannot understand. My soul revolts at the idea of a doctrine that lays the blood of man's soul at God's door. I cannot conceive how any human mind, at least any Christian mind, can hold any such blasphemy as that. I delight to preach this blessed truth—salvation of God, from first to last—the Alpha and the Omega; but when I come to preach damnation, I say, damnation of man, not of God; and if you perish, at your own hands must your blood be required. There is another passage. At the last great day, when all the world shall come before Jesus to be judged, have you noticed, when the righteous go on the right side, Jesus says, "Come, ye blessed of my father,"—"of my father," mark,)—"inherit the kingdom prepared"—(mark the next word)—"*for you*, from before the foundation of the world." What does he say to those on the left? "Depart, ye cursed." He does not say, "ye cursed of my father," but, "ye cursed." And what else does he say? "into everlasting fire, prepared"—(*not for you*, but)—"for the devil and his angels." Do you see how it is guarded. Here is the salvation

side of the question. It is all of God. "Come, ye blessed of my father." It is a kingdom prepared for them. There you have election, free grace in all its length and breadth. But, on the other hand, you have nothing said about the father—nothing about that at all. "Depart, ye cursed." Even the flames are said not to be prepared for sinners, but for the devil and his angels. There is no language that I can possibly conceive that could more forcibly express this idea, supposing it to be the mind of the Holy Spirit, that the glory should be to God, and that the blame should be laid at man's door.

Now, have I not answered these two questions honestly? I have endeavoured to give a scriptural reason for the dealings of God with man. He saves man by grace, and if men perish they perish justly by their own fault. "How," says some one, "do you reconcile these two doctrines?" My dear brethren, I never reconcile two friends, never. These two doctrines are friends with one another; for they are both in God's Word, and I shall not attempt to reconcile them. If you show me that they are enemies, then I will reconcile them. "But," says one, "there is a great deal of difficulty about them." Will you tell me what truth there is that has not difficulty about it? "But," he says, "I do not see it." Well, I do not ask you to see it; I ask you to believe it. There are many things in God's Word that are difficult, and that I cannot see, but they are there, and I believe them. I cannot see how God can be omnipotent and man be free; but it is so, and I believe it. "Well," says one, "I cannot understand it. My answer is, I am bound to make it as plain as I can, but if you have not any understanding, I cannot give you any; there I must leave it. But then, again, it is not a matter of understanding; it is a matter of faith. These two things are true; I do not see that they at all differ. However, if they did, I should say, if they appear to contradict one another, they do not really do so, because God never contradicts himself. And I should think in this I exhibited the power of my faith in God, that I could believe him, even when his word seemed to be contradictory. That is faith. Did not Abraham believe in God even when God's promise seemed to contradict his providence? Abraham was old, and Sarah was old, but God said Sarah should have a child. How can that be? said Abraham, for Sarah is old; and yet Abraham believed the promise, and Sarah had a son. There was a reconciliation between providence and promise; and if God can bring providence and promise together, he can bring doctrine and promise together. If I cannot do it, God can even in the world to come.

Now, let me just practically preach this for one minute. Oh, sinners, if ye perish, on your own head must be your doom. Conscience tells you this, and the Word of God confirms it. You shall not be able to lay your condemnation at any man's door but your own. If you perish you perish by suicide. You are your own destroyers, because you reject Christ, because you despise the birthright and sell it for that miserable mess of pottage—the pleasures of the world. It is a doctrine that thrills through me. Like a two edged sword, I would make it pierce to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow. If you are damned it shall be your own fault. If you are found in hell, your blood shall be on your own head. You shall bring the faggots to your own burning; you shall dig the iron for your own chains; and on your own head will be your doom. But if you are saved, it cannot be by your merits, it must be by grace—free, sovereign grace. The gospel is preached to you; it is this: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

May grace now be given to you to bring you to yield to this glorious command. May you now believe in him who came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Free grace, who shall tell thy glories? who shall narrate thy achievements, or write thy victories? Thou hast carried the cunning Jacob into glory and made him white as the angels of heaven, and thou shalt carry many a black sinner there also, and make him glorious as the glorified. May God prove this doctrine to be true in your own experience! If there still remains any difficulty upon your minds about any of these points, search the Word of God, and seek the illumination of his Spirit to teach you. But recollect after all, these are not the most important points in Scripture. That which concerns you most, is to know whether *you* have an interest in the blood of Christ? whether you really believe in the Lord Jesus. I have only touched upon these, because they cause a great many people a world of trouble, and I thought I might be the means of helping some of you to tread upon the neck of the dragon. May God grant that it may be so for Christ's sake.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 4, 1856, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?—Matthew xx. 15.

THE householder says, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" and even so does the God of heaven and earth ask this question of you this morning, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" There is no attribute of God more comforting to his children than the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe troubles, they believe that Sovereignty hath ordained their afflictions, that Sovereignty overrules them, and that Sovereignty will sanctify them all. There is nothing for which the children of God ought more earnestly to contend than the dominion of their Master over all creation—the kingship of God over all the works of his own hands—the throne of God, and his right to sit upon that throne. On the other hand, there is no doctrine more hated by worldlings, no truth of which they have made such a foot-ball, as the great, stupendous, but yet most certain doctrine of the Sovereignty of the infinite Jehovah. Men will allow God to be everywhere except on his throne. They will allow him to be in his workshop to fashion worlds and to make stars. They will allow him to be in his almonry to dispense his alms and bestow his bounties. They will allow him to sustain the earth and bear up the pillars thereof, or light the lamps of heaven, or rule the waves of the ever-moving ocean; but when God ascends his throne, his creatures then gnash their teeth; and when we proclaim an *enthroned God*, and his right to do as he wills with his own, to dispose of his creatures as he thinks well, without consulting them in the matter, then it is that we are hissed and execrated, and then it is that men turn a deaf ear to us, for God on his throne is not the God they love. They love him anywhere better than they do when he sits with his sceptre in his hand and his crown upon his head. But it is God upon the throne that we love to preach. It is God upon his throne whom we trust. It is God upon his throne of whom we have been singing this morning; and it is God upon his throne of whom we shall speak in this discourse. I shall dwell only, however, upon one portion of God's Sovereignty, and that is God's Sovereignty in the distribution of his gifts. In this respect I believe he has a right to do as he wills with his own, and that he exercises that right.

We must assume, before we commence our discourse, one thing certain, namely, that all blessings are gifts and that we have no claim to them by our own merit. This I think every considerate mind will grant. And this being admitted, we shall endeavour to show that he has a right, seeing they are his own to do what he wills with them—to withhold them wholly if he pleaseth—to distribute them all if he chooseth—to give to some and not to others—to give to none or to give to all, just as seemeth good in his sight. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"

We shall divide God's gifts into five classes. First, we shall have gifts *temporal*; second, gifts *saving*; third, gifts *honourable*; fourth, gifts *useful*; and fifth, gifts *comfortable*. Of all these we shall say, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"

I. In the first place then, we notice GIFTS TEMPORAL. It is an indisputable fact that God hath not, in temporal matters, given to every man alike; that he hath not distributed to all his creatures the same amount of happiness or the same standing in creation. There is a difference. Mark what a difference there is in *men* personally (for we shall consider men chiefly); one is born like Saul, a head and shoulders taller than the rest—another shall live all his life a Zaccheus—a man short of stature. One has a muscular frame and a share of beauty—another is weak, and far from having anything styled comeliness. How many do we find whose eyes have never rejoiced in the sunlight, whose ears have never listened to the charms of music, and whose lips have never been moved to sounds intelligible or harmonious. Walk through the earth and you will find men superior to yourself in vigour, health, and fashion, and others who are your inferiors in the very same respects. Some here are preferred far above their fellows in their outward appearance, and some sink low in the scale and have nothing about them that can make them glory in the flesh. Why hath God given to one man beauty and to another none? to one all his senses, and to another but a portion? why, in some, hath he quickened the sense of apprehension, while others are obliged to bear about them a dull and stubborn body? We reply, let men say what they will, that no answer can be given except this, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." The old Pharisees asked, "Did this man sin or his parents, that he was born blind?" We know that there was neither sin in parents nor child, that he was born blind, or that others have suffered similar distresses, but that God has done as it has pleased him in the distribution of his earthly benefits, and thus hath said to the world, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"

Mark, also, in the distribution of *mental gifts*, what a difference exists. All men are not like Socrates; there are but few Platos; we can discover but here and there a Bacon; we shall but every now and then converse with a Sir Isaac Newton. Some have stupendous intellects wherewith they can unravel secrets—fathom the depths of oceans—measure mountains—dissect the sunbeams, and weigh the stars. Others have but shallow minds. You may educate and educate, but can never make them great. You cannot improve what is not there. They have not genius, and you cannot impart it. Anybody may see that there is an inherent difference in men from their very birth. Some, with a little education do surpass those who have been elaborately trained. There are two boys, educated it may be in the same school, by the same master, and they shall apply themselves to their studies with the same diligence, but yet one shall far outstrip his fellow. Why is this? Because God hath asserted his sovereignty over the intellect as well as the body. God hath not made us all alike, but diversified his gifts. One man is as eloquent as Whitfield; another stammers if he but speaks three words of his mother tongue. What makes these various differences between man and man? We answer, we must refer it all to the Sovereignty of God, who does as he wills with his own.

Note, again, what are the differences of *men's conditions in this world*. Mighty minds are from time to time discovered in men whose limbs are wearing the chains of slavery, and whose backs are laid bare to the whip—they have black skins, but are in mind vastly superior to their brutal masters. So, too, in England; we find wise men often poor, and rich men not seldom ignorant and vain. One comes into the world to be arrayed at once in the imperial purple—another shall never wear aught but the humble garb of a peasant. One has a palace to dwell in and a bed of down for his repose, while another finds but a hard resting-place, and shall never have a more sumptuous covering than the thatch of his own cottage. If we ask the reason for this, the reply still is, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." So, in other ways you will observe in passing through life how sovereignty displays itself. To one man God giveth a long life and uniform health, so that he scarcely knows what it is to have a day's sickness, while another totters through the world and finds a grave at

almost every step, feeling a thousand deaths in fearing one. One man, even in extreme old age, like Moses, has his eye undimmed; and though his hair is grey, he stands as firmly on his feet as when a young man in his father's house. Whence, again, we ask is this difference? And the only adequate answer is, it is the effect of Jehovah's Sovereignty. You find, too, that some men are cut off in the prime of their life—the very midst of their days—while others live beyond their threescore years and ten. One departs before he has reached the first stage of existence, and another has his life lengthened out until it becomes quite a burden; we must, I conceive, necessarily trace the cause of all these differences in life to the fact of God's Sovereignty. He is Ruler and King, and shall he not do as he wills with his own.

We pass from this point—but before we do so we must stop to improve it just a moment. O thou who art gifted with a noble frame, a comely body, boast not thyself therein, for thy gifts come from God. O glory not, for if thou gloriest thou becomest **uncomely** in a moment. The flowers boast not of their beauty, nor do the birds sing of their plumage. Be ye not vain ye daughters of beauty; be not exalted ye sons of comeliness; and O ye men of might and intellect, remember, that all you have is bestowed by a Sovereign Lord: he did create; he can destroy. There are not many steps between the mightiest intellect and the helpless idiot—deep thought verges on insanity. Thy brain may at any moment, be smitten, and thou be doomed henceforth to live a madman. Boast not thyself of all that thou knowest, for even the little knowledge thou hast has been given thee. Therefore, I say, exalt not thyself above measure, but use for God what God has given thee, for it is a royal gift, and thou shouldst not lay it aside. But if the Sovereign Lord has given thee one talent, and no more, lay it not up in a napkin, but use it well, and then it may be that he will give thee more. Bless God that thou hast *more* than others, and thank him also that he has given thee *less* than others, for thou hast less to carry on thy shoulders; and the lighter thy burden the less cause wilt thou have to groan as thou travellest on towards the better land. Bless God then if thou possessest less than thy fellows, and see his goodness in withholding as well as in giving.

II. So far most men probably have gone with us; but when we come to the second point, **GIFTS SAVING**, there will a large number who will go from us because they cannot receive our doctrine. When we apply this truth regarding the Divine Sovereignty to man's salvation, then we find men standing up to defend their poor fellow creatures whom they conceive to be injured by God's predestination. But I never heard of men standing up for the devil; and yet I think if any of God's creatures have a right to complain of his dealings it is *the fallen angels*. For their sin they were hurled from heaven at once, and we read not that any message of mercy was ever sent to them. Once cast out, their doom was sealed; while men were respited, redemption sent into their world, and a large number of them chosen to eternal life. Why not quarrel with Sovereignty in the one case as well as the other. We say that God has elected a people out of the human race, and his right to do this is denied. But I ask, why not equally dispute the fact that God has chosen men and not fallen angels, or his justice in such a choice. If salvation be a matter of right, surely the angels had as much claim to mercy as men. Were they not seated in more than equal dignity? Did they sin more? We think not. Adam's sin was so wilful and complete, that we cannot suppose a greater sin than that which he committed. Would not the angels who were thrust out of heaven have been of greater service to their Maker if restored, than we can ever be? Had we been the judges in this matter we might have given deliverance to angels but not to men. Admire then, Divine Sovereignty and love, that whereas the angels were broken into shivers, God hath raised an elect number of the race of men to set them among princes, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Note again, the Divine Sovereignty, in that *God chose the Israelitish race and left the Gentiles for years in darkness*. Why was Israel instructed and saved, while Syria was left to perish in idolatry? Was the one race purer in its origin and better in its character than the other? Did not the Israelites take unto themselves false gods a thousand times, and provoke the true God to anger and

loathing? Why then, should they be favoured above their fellows? Why did the sun of heaven shine upon them while all around the nations were left in darkness, and were sinking into hell by myriads? Why? The only answer that can be given is this, that God is a Sovereign, and "will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

So now, also, why is it that God *hath sent his word to us while a multitude of people are still without his word?* Why do we each come up to God's tabernacle, Sabbath after Sabbath, privileged to listen to the voice of the minister of Jesus, while other nations have not been visited thereby? Could not God have caused the light to shine in the darkness there as well as here? Could not he, if he had pleased, have sent forth messengers swift as the light to proclaim his gospel over the whole earth? He could have done it if he would. Since we know that he has not done it, we bow in meekness, confessing his right to do as he wills with his own.

But let me drive the doctrine home once more. Behold how God displays his Sovereignty in this fact, that *out of the same congregation, those who hear the same minister, and listen to the same truth, the one is taken and the other left.* Why is it that one of my hearers shall sit in yonder pew, and her sister by her side, and yet that the effect of the preaching shall be different upon each? They have been nursed on the same knee, rocked in the same cradle, educated under the same auspices, they hear the same minister, with the same attention—why is it that the one shall be saved and the other left? Far be it from us to weave any excuse for the man who is damned: we know of none: but also, far be it from us to take glory from God. We assert that God makes the difference—that the saved sister will not have to thank herself but her God. There shall even be two men given to drunkenness. Some word spoken shall pierce one of them through, but the other shall sit unmoved, although they shall, in all respects, be equally the same both in constitution and education. What is the reason? You will reply, perhaps, because the one accepts and the other rejects the message of the gospel. But must you not come back to the question, who made the one accept it, and who made the other reject it? I *dare* you to say that the man made himself to differ. You *must* admit in your conscience that it is God alone to whom this power belongs. But those who dislike this doctrine are nevertheless up in arms against us; and they say, how can God justly make such a difference between the members of his family? Suppose a father should have a certain number of children, and he should give to one all his favors, and consign the others to misery—should we not say that he was a very unkind and cruel father? I answer, yes. But the cases are not the same. You have *not a father* to deal with, but *a judge*. You say all men are God's children; I demand of you to prove that, I never read it in my Bible. I dare not say, "Our father which art in heaven," till I am regenerated. I cannot rejoice in the fatherhood of God towards me till I know that I am one with him, and a joint heir with Christ. I dare not claim the fatherhood of God as an unregenerated man. It is not father and child—for the child has a claim upon its father—but it is King and subject; and not even so high a relation as that, for there is a claim between subject and King. A creature—a sinful creature, can have no claim upon God; for that would be to make salvation of works and not of grace. If men can merit salvation, then to save them is only the payment of a debt, and he gives them nothing more than he ought to give them. But we assert that grace must be distinguishing if it be grace at all. O,

but some say is it not written that "*He giveth to every man a measure of grace to profit withal?*" If you like to repeat that wonderful quotation so often hurled at my head, you are very welcome, for it is no quotation from Scripture, unless it be an Arminian edition. The only passage at all like it refers to the spiritual gifts of the saints and the saints only. But I say, granted your supposition, that a measure of grace is given to every man to profit withal, yet he hath given to some a measure of particular grace to make that profit. For what do you mean by grace, which I put out, to profit? I can understand a man's improvement in the use of grease, but grace improved and made use of by the power of man I cannot comprehend. Grace is not a thing which I use; grace is something which uses me. But people talk of grace sometimes as if it was something they could use, and not as influence having power over them. Grace is something not which I improve, but which improves me, employs me, works on me; and let people talk as they will about universal grace, it is all nonsense, there is no such thing, nor can there be. They may talk correctly of universal blessings, because we see that the natural gifts of God are scattered everywhere, more or less, and men may receive or reject them. It is not so, however, with grace. Men cannot take the grace of God and employ it in turning themselves from darkness to light. The light does not come to the darkness and say, use me; but the light comes and drives the darkness away. Life does not come to the dead man and say, use me, and be restored to life; but it comes with a power of its own and restores to life. The spiritual influence does not come to the dry bones and say, use this power and clothe yourselves with flesh; but it comes and clothes them with flesh, and the work is done. Grace is a thing which comes and exercises an influence on us.

"The sovereign will of God alone
Creates us heirs of grace;
Born in the image of his Son,
A new-created race."

And we say to all of you who gnash your teeth at this doctrine, whether you know it or not, you have a vast deal of enmity towards God in your hearts; for until you can be brought to know this doctrine, there is something which you have not yet discovered, which makes you opposed to the idea of God absolute, God unbounded, God unfettered, God unchanging, and God having a free will, which you are so fond of proving that the creature possesses. I am persuaded that the Sovereignty of God must be held by us if we would be in a healthy state of mind. "Salvation is of the Lord alone." Then give all the glory to his holy name, to whom all glory belongs.

III. We now come, in the third place, to notice the differences which God often makes in his Church in HONOURABLE GIFTS. There is a difference made between God's own children—when they are his children. Note what I mean: One hath the honourable gift of *knowledge*, another knows but little. I meet, every now and then, with a dear Christian brother with whom I could talk for a month, and learn something from him every day. He has had deep experience—he has seen into the deep things of God—his whole life has been a perpetual study wherever he has been. He seems to have gathered thoughts, not from books merely, but from men, from God, from his own heart. He knows all the intricacies and windings of Christian experience: he understands the heights, the depths, the lengths, and the breadths of the love of Christ, which passeth

knowledge. He has gained a grand idea, an intimate knowledge of the system of grace, and can vindicate the dealings of the Lord with his people.

Then you meet with another who has passed through many troubles, but he has no deep acquaintance with Christian experience. He never learned a single secret by all his troubles. He just floundered out of one trouble into another, but never stopped to pick up any of the jewels that lay in the mire—never tried to discover the precious jewels that lay in his afflictions. He knows very little more of the heights and depths of the Saviour's love than when he first came into the world. You may converse with such a man as long as you like, but you will get nothing from him. If you ask why is it, I answer, there is a Sovereignty of God in giving knowledge to some and not to others. I was walking the other day with an aged Christian, who told me how he had profited by my ministry. There is nothing humbles me like that thought of yon old man deriving experience in the things of God, receiving instruction in the ways of the Lord from a mere babe in grace. But I expect that when I am an old man, if I should live to be such, that some babe in grace will instruct me. God sometimes shutteth the mouth of the old man and openeth the mouth of the child. Why should we be a teacher to hundreds who are, in some respects, far more able to teach us? The only answer we can find is in the Divine Sovereignty, and we must bow before it, for has he not a right to do as he wills with his own? Instead of being envious of those who have the gift of knowledge, we should seek to gain the same, if possible. Instead of sitting down and murmuring that we have not more knowledge, we should remember that the foot cannot say to the head, nor the head to the foot, I have no need of thee, for God hath given us talents as it hath pleased him.

Note, again, when speaking of honourable gifts. Not only knowledge, but *office* is an honourable gift. There is nothing more honourable to a man than the office of a deacon or a minister. We magnify our office, though we would not magnify ourselves. We hold there is nothing can dignify a man more than being appointed to an office in a Christian church. I would rather be a deacon of a church than Lord Mayor of London. To be a minister of Christ is in my estimation an infinitely higher honour than the world can bestow. My pulpit is to me more desirable than a throne, and my congregation is an empire more than large enough; an empire before which the empires of the earth dwindle into nothing in everlasting importance. Why does God give to one man a special call by the Holy Ghost, to be a minister, and pass by another? There is another man more gifted, perhaps, but we dare not put him in a pulpit, because he has not had a special call. So with the deaconship; the man whom some would perhaps think most suitable for the office is passed by, and another chosen. There is a manifestation of God's Sovereignty in the appointment to office—in putting David on a throne, in making Moses the leader of the children of Israel through the wilderness, in choosing Daniel to stand among princes, in electing Paul to be the minister to the Gentiles, and Peter to be the Apostle of the Circumcision. And you who have not the gift of honourable office, must learn the great truth contained in the question of the Master, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"

There is another honourable gift, the gift of *utterance*. Eloquence hath more power over men than all else besides. If a man would have power over the multitude, he must seek to touch their hearts, and chain their ears. There are some men who are like vessels full of knowledge to the brim, but having no means of giving it forth to the world. They are rich in all gems of learning,

but know not how to set them in the golden ring of eloquence. They can collect the choicest of flowers, but know not how to tie them up in a sweet garland to present them to the admirer's eye. How is this? We say again, the Sovereignty of God is here displayed in the distribution of gifts honourable. Learn here, O Christian man, if you have gifts, to cast the honour of them at the Saviour's feet, and if you possess them not, learn not to murmur; remember that God is equally as kind when he keepeth back as when he distributeth his favours. If any among you be exalted, let him not be puffed up; if any be lowly, let him not be despised; for God giveth to every vessel his measure of grace. Serve him after your measure, and adore the King of Heaven who doth as he pleaseth.

IV. We notice in the fourth place, the gift of USEFULNESS. I have often done wrong in finding fault with brother ministers for not being useful, I have said you might have been as useful as I have been had you been in earnest. But surely there are others even more earnest, and more efficient: others labouring as constantly, but with far less effect. And, therefore, let me retract my accusation, and in lieu thereof assert that the gift of usefulness is the result of God's Sovereignty. It is not in man to be useful, but in God to make him useful. We may labour ourselves with all our might, but God alone can make us useful. We can put every stitch of canvass on when the wind blows, but we cannot make the wind blow.

The Sovereignty of God is seen also in the diversity of ministerial gifts. You go to one minister and are fed with plenty of good food: another has not enough to feed a mouse; he has plenty of reproof, but no food for the child of God. Another can comfort the child of God, but he cannot reprove a backslider. He has not strength of mind enough to give those earnest home strokes which are sometimes needed. And what is the reason! God's Sovereignty. One can wield the sledge hammer but could not heal a broken heart. If he were to attempt it, you would be reminded of an elephant trying to thread a needle. Such a man can reprove, but he cannot apply oil and wine to a bruised conscience. Why? Because God hath not given to him the gift. There is another one who always preaches experimental divinity; and very rarely touches upon doctrine. Another is all doctrine, and cannot preach much about Jesus Christ and him crucified. Why? God hath not given him the gift of doctrine. Another always preaches Jesus—blessed Jesus; men of the Hawker school—and many say, oh! they do not give us experience enough; they do not go into the deep experience of the corruption which vexes the children of God. But we do not blame them for this. You will notice that out of the same man will at one time flow streams of living water, while at another time he will be as dry as possible. On one Sabbath you go away refreshed by the preaching, and the next you get no good. There is Divine Sovereignty in all this, and we must learn to recognize and admire it. I was preaching on one occasion last week to a large crowd of people, and in one part of the sermon the people were very much effected; I felt that the power of God was there; one poor creature absolutely shrieked out because of the wrath of God against sin; but at another time the same words might have been uttered and there might have been the same desire in the minister's heart, and yet no effect produced. We must trace, I say, Divine Sovereignty in all such cases. We ought to recognize God's hand in everything. But the present is the most godless generation that ever trod this earth, I verily believe. In our father's days there was hardly a shower but

they declared that God caused it to fall ; and they had prayers for rain, prayers for sunshine, and prayers for harvest ; as well when a haystack was on fire, as when a famine desolated the land ; our forefathers said, the Lord hath done it. But now our philosophers try to explain everything, and trace all phenomena to second causes. But brethren, let it be ours to ascribe the origin and direction of all things to the Lord, and the Lord alone.

V. Lastly, GIFTS COMFORTABLE are of God. O, what comfortable gifts do some of us enjoy in the ordinances of God's house, and in a ministry that is profitable. But how many churches have not a ministry of that kind ; and why then have we ? Because God hath made a difference. Some here have strong faith, and can laugh at impossibilities ; we can sing a song in all ill weathers—in the tempest as well as in the calm. But there is another with little faith who is in danger of tumbling down over every straw. We trace eminent faith entirely to God. One is born with a melancholy temperament, and he sees a tempest brewing even in the calm ; while another is cheerful, and sees a silver lining to every cloud, however black, and he is a happy man. But why is that ? Comfortable gifts come of God. And then observe that we ourselves, differ at times. For a season we may have blessed intercourse with heaven, and be permitted to look within the veil ? but anon, these delightful enjoyments are gone. But do we murmur on that account ? May he not do as he will with his own ? May he not take back what he has given ? The comforts we possess were his before they were ours.

“ And shouldst thou take them all away,
Yet would I not repine,
Before they were possessed by me
They were entirely thine.”

There is no joy of the Spirit—there is no exceeding blessed hope—no strong faith—no burning desire—no close fellowship with Christ, which is not the gift of God, and which we must not trace to him. When I am in darkness and suffer disappointment, I will look up and say, he giveth songs in the night ; and when I am made to rejoice, I will say, my mountain shall stand fast for ever. The Lord is a Sovereign Jehovah ; and, therefore, prostrate at his feet I lie, and if I perish, I will perish there.

But let me say, brethren, that so far from this doctrine of Divine Sovereignty making you to sit down in sloth, I hope in God it will have a tendency to humble you, and so to lead you to say, “ I am unworthy of the least of all thy mercies. I feel that thou hast a right to do with me as thou wilt. If thou dost crush me, a helpless worm, thou wilt not be dishonoured ; and I have no right to ask thee to have compassion upon me, save this, that I want thy mercy. Lord, if thou wilt, thou art able to pardon, and thou never gavest grace to one that wanted it more. Because I am empty, fill me with the bread of heaven ; because I am naked, clothe me with thy robe ; because I am dead, give me life.” If you press that plea with all your soul and all your mind, though Jehovah is a Sovereign, he will stretch out his sceptre and save, and thou shalt live to worship him in the beauty of holiness, loving and adoring his gracious Sovereignty. “ He that believeth ” is the declaration of Scripture “ and is baptized, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” He that believeth in Christ alone, and is baptized with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, shall be saved, but he who rejecteth Christ and believeth not in him, shall be damned. That is the Sovereign decree and proclamation of heaven—bow to it, acknowledge it, obey it, and God bless you.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

ELECTION AND HOLINESS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 11TH, 1860, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked."—Deuteronomy x. 14, 15, 16.

HE who preaches the whole truth as it is in Jesus will labour under continual disadvantages; albeit, that the grand advantage of having the presence and blessing of God will more than compensate the greatest loss. It has been my earnest endeavour ever since I have preached the Word, never to keep back a single doctrine which I believe to be taught of God. It is time that we had done with the old and rusty systems that have so long curbed the freeness of religious speech. The Arminian trembles to go an inch beyond Arminius or Wesley, and many a Calvinist refers to John Gill or John Calvin, as any ultimate authority. It is time that the systems were broken up, and that there was sufficient grace in all our hearts to believe everything taught in God's Word, whether it was taught by either of these men or not. I have frequently found when I have preached what is called high doctrine, because I found it in my text, that some people have been offended; they could not enjoy it, could not endure it, and went away. They were generally people who were best gone; I have never regretted their absence. On the other hand, when I have taken for my text some sweet invitation, and have preached the freeness of Christ's love to man; when I have warned sinners that they are responsible while they hear the gospel, and that if they reject Christ their blood will be upon their own heads, I find another class of doubtless excellent individuals who cannot see how these two things agree. And therefore, they also turn aside, and wade into the deceptive miry bogs of Antinomianism. I can only say with regard to them, that I had rather also that they should go to their own sort, than that they should remain with my congregation. We seek to hold the truth. We know no difference between high doctrine and low doctrine. If God teaches it, it is enough. If it is not in the Word, away with it! away with it! but if it be in the Word, agreeable or disagreeable, systematic or disorderly, I believe it. It may seem to us as if one truth stood in opposition to another, but we are fully convinced that it cannot be so, that it is a mistake in our judgment. That the two things do agree we are quite clear, though where they meet we do not know as yet, but hope to know hereafter. That God has a people whom he has chosen for himself, and who shall shew forth his praise, we do believe to be a doctrine legible in the Word of God to every man who cares to read that Book with an honest and candid judgment. That, at the same time, Christ is freely presented to every creature under heaven, and that the invitations and exhortations of the gospel are honest and true invitations—not fictions or myths, not tantalisations and mockeries, but realities and facts—we do also unfeignedly believe. We subscribe to both truths with our hearty assent and consent.

Now, this morning it may be that some of you will not approve of what I have to say. You will remember, however, that I do not seek your approbation, that it will be sufficient for me if I have cleared my conscience concerning a grand truth and have preached the gospel faithfully. I am not accountable to you, nor you to me. You are accountable to God, if you reject a truth; I am accountable to Him if I preach an error. I am not afraid to stand before His bar with regard to the great doctrines which I shall preach to you this day.

Now, two things this morning. First, I shall attempt to *set forth God's Election*; secondly, to show its *practical bearings*. You have both in the text. "Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their

seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day." And, then, in the second place, its practical bearings, "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked."

I. In SETTING FORTH ELECTION, I must have you observe, first of all, *its extraordinary singularity*. God has chosen to himself a people whom no man can number, out of the children of Adam—out of the fallen and apostate race who sprang from the loins of a rebellious man. Now, this is a wonder of wonders, when we come to consider that the heaven, even the heaven of heavens, is the Lord's. If God must have a chosen race, why did he not select one from the majestic orders of angels; or from the flaming cherubim and seraphim who stand around his throne? Why was not Gabriel fixed upon? Why was he not so constituted that from his loins there might spring a mighty race of angels, and why were not these chosen of God from before the foundations of the world? What could there be in *man*, a creature lower than the angels, that God should select him rather than the angelic spirits? Why were not the cherubim and seraphim given to Christ? Why did he not take up angels? Why did he not assume their nature, and take them into union with himself? An angelic body might be more in keeping with the person of Deity, than a body of weak and suffering flesh and blood. There were something congruous if he had said unto the angels, "Ye shall be my sons." But, no! though all these were his own, he passes by the hierarchy of angels, and stoops to man. He takes up an apostate worm, and says unto him, "Thou shalt be my son," and to myriads of the same race he cries, "ye shall be my sons and daughters, by a covenant for ever." But, saith one, "It seems that God intended to choose a fallen people that he might in them show forth his grace. Now, the angels of course would be unsuitable for this, since they have not fallen." I reply, there are angels that have fallen; there were angels that kept not the first estate, but fell from their dignity. And how is it that these are consigned to blackness of darkness for ever? Answer me, ye that deny God's sovereignty, and hate his election—how is it that angels are condemned to everlasting fire, while to you, the children of Adam, the gospel of Christ is freely preached? The only answer that can possibly be given is this: God wills to do it. He has a right to do as he pleases with his own mercy. Angels deserve no mercy: we deserve none. Nevertheless, he gave it to us, and he denied it them. They are bound in chains, reserved for everlasting fire to the last great day, but we are saved. Before thy sovereignty, I bow, great God, and acknowledge that thou doest as thou wilt, and that thou givest no account of thy matters. Why, if there were any reason to move God in his creatures, he would certainly have chosen devils rather than men. The sin of the first of the fallen angels was not greater than that of Adam. It is not the time to enter into that question. I could, if opportunity were needed, prove it to be rather less than greater, if there were degrees in sin. Had the angels been reclaimed, they could have glorified God more than we; they could have sang his praises louder than we can, clogged as we are with flesh and blood. But passing by the greater, he chose the less, that he might show forth his sovereignty, which is the brightest jewel in the crown of his divinity. Our Arminian antagonists always leave the fallen angels out of the question: for it is not convenient to them to recollect this ancient instance of Election. They call it unjust, that God should choose one man and not another. By what reasoning can this be unjust when they will admit that it was righteous enough in God to choose one race—the race of men, and leave another race—the race of angels, to be sunk into misery on account of sin. Brethren, let us have done with arraiging God at our poor fallible judgment seat. He is good and doeth righteousness. Whatever he doth we may know to be right, whether we can see the righteousness or no.

I have given you, then, some reasons: t starting, why we should regard God's Election as being singular. But I have to offer to you others. Observe, the text not only says, "Behold, the heaven, even the heaven of the heavens is the Lord's," but it adds, "the earth also, with all that therein is." Now, when we think that God has chosen us, when you, my brethren, who by grace have put your trust in Christ, read your "title clear to mansions in the skies," you may well pause and say in the language of that hymn—

"Pause, my soul! adore, and wonder!
Ask, 'O why such love to me?'"

Kings passed by and beggars chosen; wise men left, but fools made to know the wonders of his redeeming love; publicans and harlots sweetly compelled to come to the feast of mercy; while proud Pharisees are suffered to trust in their own righteousness and perish in their vain boastings. God's choice will ever seem in the eyes of unrenewed men to be a very strange one. He has passed over those whom we

should have selected, and he has chosen just the odds and ends of the universe, the men who thought themselves the least likely ever to taste of his grace. Why were we chosen as a people to have the privilege of the gospel? Are there not other nations as great as we have been? Sinful a people as this English nation has manifested itself to be, why has God selected the Anglo-Saxon race to receive the pure truth, while nations who might have received the light with even greater joy than ourselves, still lie shrouded in darkness, and the sun of the gospel has never risen on them? Why, again, I say, in the case of each individual, why is the man chosen who is chosen? Can any answer be given but just the answer of our Saviour—"Even so, Father, for it seemeth good in thy sight?"

Yet one other thought, to make God's Election marvellous indeed. God had unlimited power of creation. Now, if he willed to make a people who should be his favourites, who should be united to the person of his Son, and who should reign with him, why did he not make a new race? When Adam sinned, it would have been easy enough to strike the world out of existence. He had but to speak and this round earth would have been dissolved, as the bubble dies into the wave that bears it. There would have been no trace of Adam's sin left, the whole might have died away and have been forgotten for ever. But no! Instead of making a new people, a pure people who could not sin, instead of taking to himself creatures that were pure, unsullied, without spot, he takes a depraved and fallen people, and lifts these up, and that, too, by costly means; by the death of his own Son, by the work of his own Spirit; that these must be the jewels in his crown to reflect his glory for ever. Oh, singular choice! Oh, strange Election! My soul is lost in thy depths, and I can only pause and cry, "Oh, the goodness, oh, the mercy, oh, the sovereignty of God's grace."

Having thus spoken about its singularity, I turn to another subject. Observe the *unconstrained freeness* of electing love. In our text this is hinted at by the word "*ONLY*." Why did God love their fathers? Why, *only* because he did so. There is no other reason. "*Only*, the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day." There was doubtless some wise reason for the Lord's acts, for he doeth all things after the counsel of his will, but there certainly could not be any reason in the excellence or virtue of the creature whom he chose. Now, just dwell upon that for a moment. Let us remark that there is no original goodness in those whom God selects. What was there in Abraham that God chose him? He came out of an idolatrous people, and it is said of his posterity—a Syrian ready to perish was thy father. As if God would show that it was not the goodness of Abraham, he says, "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him." There was nothing more in Abraham than in any one of us why God should have selected him, for whatever good was in Abraham God put there. Now, if God put it there, the motive for his putting it there could not be the fact of his putting it there. You cannot find a motive for a fact in itself; there must be some motive lying higher than anything which can be found in the mere act of God. If God chose a man to make that man holy, righteous, and good, he cannot have chosen him because he was to be good and righteous. It were absurd to reason thus. It were drawing a cause for an effect, and making an effect a cause. If I were to plead that the rose bud were the author of the root, well! I might, indeed, be laughed at. But were I to urge that any goodness in man is the ground of God's choice, when I call to recollection that that goodness is the effect of God's choice, I should be foolish indeed. That which is the effect cannot be the cause. But what original good is there in any man? If God chose us for anything good in ourselves, we must all be left unchosen. Have we not all an evil heart of unbelief? Have we not all departed from his ways? Are we not all by nature corrupt, enemies to God by wicked works? If he chooses us it cannot be because of any original goodness in us. "But," saith one, "perhaps it may be because of goodness foreseen; God has chosen his people, because he foresees that they will believe and be saved." A singular idea, indeed! Here are a certain number of poor persons, and a prince comes into the place. To some ninety out of the hundred he distributes gold. Some one asks the question, "Why did the prince give this gold to those ninety?" A madman in a corner, whose face ought never to be seen, replies, "He gave it to them because he foresaw that they would have it." But how could he foresee that they would have it apart from the fact that he gave it to them? Now, you say that God gives faith, repentance, salvation, because he foresaw that men would have it. He did not foresee it apart from the fact that he intended to give it them. He foresaw that he would give them grace. But what was the reason that he gave it to them? Certainly, not his foresight. That were absurd, indeed! and none but a madman would reason thus. Oh, Father, if thou hast given me life, and light, and joy, and

peace, the reason is known only to thyself; for reasons in myself I ne'er can find, for I am still a wanderer from thee, and often does my faith flicker, and my love grow dim. There is nothing in me to merit esteem or give thee delight. It is all by thy grace, thy grace alone that I am what I am. So will every Christian say; so must every Christian indeed confess.

But is it not all idle talk, even to controvert for a single moment, with the absurd idea that man can fetter his Maker. Shall the purpose of the Eternal be left contingent on the will of man? Shall man be really his Maker's master? Shall free-will take the place of the divine energy? Shall man take the throne of God, and set aside as he pleases all the purposes of Jehovah—compelling him by merit to choose him? Shall there be something that man can do, that shall control the motions of Jehovah? It is said by some one that men give free-will to every one but God, and speak as if God must be the slave of men. Ay, we believe that God has given to man a free-will—that we do not deny; but we will have it that God has a free-will also—that, moreover, he has a right to exercise it, and does exercise it; and that no merit of man can have any compulsion with the Creator. Merit, on the one hand, is impossible; and even if we did possess it, it could not be possible that we could possess it in such a degree as to merit the gift of Christ. Remember, if we deserve salvation, man must have virtue enough to merit heaven, to merit union with Jesus, to merit, in fact, everlasting glory. You go back to the old Romish idea, if you once slip your anchor and cut your cable, and talk about anything in man that could have moved the mercy of God. "Well," saith one, "this is vile Calvinism." Be it so, if you choose to call it so. Calvin found his doctrine in the Scriptures. Doubtless he may have also received some instruction from the works of Augustine, but that mighty doctor of grace learned it from the writings of St. Paul; and St. Paul, the apostle of grace, received it by inspiration from Jesus the Lord. We can trace our pedigree direct to Christ himself. Therefore, we are not ashamed of any title that may be appended to a glorious truth of God. Election is free, and has nothing to do with any original goodness in man, or goodness foreseen, or any merit that man can possibly bring before God.

I come to the hardest part of my task this morning—Election in its *justice*. Now, I shall defend this great fact, that God has chosen men to himself, and I shall regard it from rather a different point of view from that which is usually taken. My defence is just this. You tell me, if God has chosen some men to eternal life, that he has been unjust. I ask you to prove it. The burden of the proof lies with you. For I would have you remember that *none merited this at all*. Is there one man in the whole world who would have the impertinence to say that he merits anything of his Maker? If so, be it known unto you that he shall have all he merits; and his reward will be the flames of hell for ever, for that is the utmost that any man ever merited of God. God is in debt to no man, and at the last great day every man shall have as much love, as much pity, and as much goodness, as he deserves. Even the lost in hell shall have all they deserve; ay, and woe worth the day for them when they shall have the wrath of God, which will be the summit of their deservings. If God gives to every man as much as he merits, is he therefore to be accused of injustice because he gives to some infinitely more than they merit? Where is the injustice of a man doing as he wills with his own? Has he not a right to give what he pleases? If God is in debt to any, then there would be injustice. But he is indebted to none, and if he gives his favours according to his own sovereign will, who is he that shall find fault? Thou hast not been injured; God has not wronged thee. Bring up thy claims, and he will fulfil them to the last jot. If thou art righteous, and canst claim something of thy Maker, stand up and plead thy virtues, and he will answer thee. Though thou gird up thy loins like a man, and stand before him, and plead thy own righteousness, he will make thee tremble, and abhor thyself, and roll in dust and ashes; for thy righteousness is a lie, and thy best performance but as filthy rags. God injures no man in blessing some. Strange is it that there should be any accusation brought against God, as though he were unjust.

I defend it again on another ground. To which of you has God ever refused his mercy and love, when you have sought his face? Has he not freely proclaimed the gospel to you all? Doth not his Word bid you come to Jesus? and doth it not solemnly say, "Whosoever will, let him come?" Are you not every Sabbath invited to come and put your trust in Christ? If you will not do it, but will destroy your own souls, who is to blame? If you put your trust in Christ you shall be saved; God will not run back from his promise. Prove him, try him. The moment you renounce sin, and trust in Christ, that moment you may know yourself to be one of his chosen ones; but if you will wickedly put from you the gospel which is daily preached, if you will not be saved, then on your own head be your blood. The only reason why you can be lost is because you would continue in sin and would not cry

to be saved therefrom. You have rejected Christ, you have put him far from you, and left to yourselves, you will not receive him. "Well, but," saith one, "I cannot come to God." Your powerlessness to come lies in the fact that you have no will to come. If thou wert but once willing thou wouldst lack no power. Thou canst not come, because thou art so wedded to thy lusts, so fond of thy sin. That is why thou canst not come. That very inability of thine is thy crime, thy guilt. Thou couldst come if thy love to evil and self were broken. The inability lies not in thy physical nature but in thy depraved moral nature. Oh! if thou wert willing to be saved! There is the point—there is the point! Thou art not willing, nor wilt thou ever be, till grace make thee willing. But who is to blame because thou art not willing to be saved? None but thyself; thou hast the whole blame. If thou refusest eternal life, if thou wilt not look to Christ, if thou wilt not trust to him, remember thy own will damns thee. Was there ever a man who had a sincere will to be saved in God's way who was denied salvation? No, no, a thousand times NO, for such a man is already taught of God. He who gives will, will not deny power. Inability lies mainly in the will. When once a man is made willing in the day of God's power, he is made able also. Therefore, your destruction lies at your own door.

Then let me ask another question. You say it is unjust that some should be lost while others are saved. Who makes those to be lost that are lost? Did God cause you to sin? Has the Spirit of God ever persuaded you to do a wrong thing? Has the Word of God ever bolstered you up in your own self-righteousness? No; God has never exercised any influence upon you to make you go the wrong way. The whole tendency of his Word, the whole tendency of the preaching of the gospel, is to persuade you to turn from sin unto righteousness, from your wicked ways to Jehovah. I say again, God is just. If you reject the Saviour proclaimed to you, if you refuse to trust him, if you will not come to him and be saved, if you are lost, God is supremely just in your being lost; but if he chooses to exert the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon some of you, he is surely just in giving the mercy which no man can claim, and so just that through eternal ages there shall never be found a flaw in his acts, but the "Holy, Holy, Holy" God shall be hymned by the redeemed, and by cherubim and seraphim; and even the lost in hell shall be compelled to utter an involuntary bass to that dread song, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth."

Having thus tried to defend the justice of Election, I now turn to notice the *truth* of it. I may possibly have here some godly men who cannot receive this doctrine. Well, my friend, I am not angry with you for not being able to receive it, because no man can receive it unless it is given him from God; no Christian will ever rejoice in it unless he has been taught of the Spirit. But, after all, my brother, if you are a renewed man, you believe it. You are coming up-stairs to controvert with me. Come along, and I will allow you to controvert with yourself, and before five minutes have passed you will out of your own mouth prove my point. Come, my dear brother, you do not believe that God can justly give to some men more grace than to others. Very well. Let us kneel down and pray together; and you shall pray first. You no sooner begin to pray than you say, "O Lord, be pleased, in thy infinite mercy, to send thy Holy Spirit to save this congregation, and be pleased to bless my relatives according to the flesh." Stop! stop! you are asking God to do something which, according to your theory, is not right. You are asking him to give them more grace than they have got; you are asking him to do something special. Positively, you are pleading with God that he would give grace to your relatives and friends, and to this congregation. How do you make that to be right in your theory? If it would be unjust in God to give more grace to one man than to another, how very unjust in you to ask him to do it! If it is all left to man's free-will why do you beg the Lord to interfere? You cry, "Lord, draw them, Lord, break their hearts, renew their spirits." Now, I very heartily use this prayer, but how can you do it, if you think it unrighteous in the Lord to endow this people with more grace than he does the rest of the human race. "Oh!" but you say, "I feel that it is right, and I will ask him." Very well; then, if it is right in you to ask, it must be right in him to give; it must be right in him to give mercy to men, and to some men such mercy that they may be constrained to be saved. You have thus proved my point, and I do not want a better proof. And now, my brother, we will have a song together, and we will see how we can get on there. Open your hymn-book, and you sing in the language of your Wesleyan hymn-book,

"Oh, yes, I do love Jesus
Because he first loved me."

There, brother, that is Calvinism. You have let it out again. You love Jesus because he first loved you. Well, how is it you come to love him while others are left not

oving him? Is that to your honour or to his honour? You say, "It is to the praise of grace; let grace have the praise." Very well, brother; we shall get on very well, after all, for, although we may not agree in preaching, yet we agree, you see, in praying and praising. Preaching a few months ago in the midst of a large congregation of Methodists, the brethren were all alive, giving all kinds of answers to my sermon, nodding their heads and crying, "Amen!" "Hallelujah!" "Glory be to God!" and the like. They completely woke me up. My spirit was stirred, and I preached away with an unusual force and vigour; and the more I preached the more they cried, "Amen!" "Hallelujah!" "Glory be to God!" At last, a part of text led me to what is styled high doctrine. So I said, this brings me to the doctrine of Election. There was a deep drawing of breath. "Now, my friends, you believe it," they seemed to say. "No, we don't." But you do, and I will make you sing "Hallelujah!" over it. I will so preach it to you that you will acknowledge it and believe it. So I put it thus: Is there no difference between you and other men? "Yes, yes; glory be to God, glory!" There is a difference between what you were and what you are now? "Oh, yes! oh, yes!" There is sitting by your side a man who has been to the same chapel as you have, heard the same gospel, he is unconverted, and you are converted. Who has made the difference, yourself or God? "The Lord!" said they, "the Lord! glory! hallelujah!" Yes, cried I, and that is the doctrine of Election; that is all I contend for, that if there be a difference the Lord made the difference. Some good man came up to me and said, "Thou'rt right, lad! thou'rt right. I believe *thy* doctrine of Election; I do not believe it as it is preached by some people, but I believe that we must give the glory to God; we must put the crown on the right head." After all, there is an instinct in every Christian heart, that makes him receive the substance of this doctrine, even if he will not receive it in the peculiar form in which *we* put it. That is enough for me. I do not care about the words or the phraseology, or the form of creed in which I may be in the habit of stating the doctrine. I do not want you to subscribe to my creed; but I do want you to subscribe to a creed that gives God the glory of his salvation. Every saint in heaven sings, "Grace has done it;" and I want every saint on earth to sing the same song, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, to him be the glory for ever and ever." The prayers, the praises, the experience of those who do not believe this doctrine prove the doctrine better than anything I can say. I do not care to prove it better, and I leave it as it is.

II. We now turn to ELECTION IN ITS PRACTICAL INFLUENCES.

You will see that the precept is annexed to the doctrine: God has loved you above all people that are upon the face of the earth; therefore, "circumcise the foreskin of your hearts and be no more stiffnecked." It is whispered that Election is a licentious doctrine. Say it out loud, and then I will answer you. Election is a licentious doctrine! How do you prove it? It is my business to prove to you that it is the very reverse. "Well but," cries one, "I know a man that believes in Election and yet lives in sin." Yes, and I suppose that disproves it. So that if I can go through London and find any ragged drunken fellow, who believes a doctrine and lives in sin, the fact of his believing it disproves it. Singular logic, that! I will undertake to disprove any truth in the world if you only give me that to be my rule. Why, I can bring up some filthy, scurvy creature, that doubts the universal bounty of God. Then, I suppose that will disprove it. I might bring up to you some wretch that is living in sin, who yet believes that if he were to cry "Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner," from his heart, he would be saved, even though he was on his dying bed; I suppose his believing that, disproves it—does it? No! You know very well, though you use such logic as that against us, you would not use it against yourself. The fact is, that the bad lives or the good lives of some individuals cannot be taken as a proof either for or against any set of doctrines. There are holy men that are mistaken; there are unholy men who receive truth. That may be seen any day by any man who will candidly make the observation. If, however, any one sect were peculiarly full of ungodly professors and hypocrites, then would I admit the force of your argument. But I defy you to the proof. The men that have believed this doctrine have been the wide world over—though perhaps, it is not my place to say it, except that I will glory in it as Paul did—have been the most zealous, most earnest, most holy men. Remember, sirs, ye that scoff at this doctrine, that ye owe your liberties to men who held it. Who carved out for England its liberties? I do not hesitate to give the palm to the strong arms of the Ironsides and the mighty will of Oliver Cromwell. But what made them dash to battle as they did but a firm belief that they were God's chosen ones, and could sweep everything before them, because the Lord their God was with them? It was said in Charles the Second's time that if you wanted to find believers in Arminianism, you could find them in every pot-house; but if you wanted to find those who believed the doctrine of grace you must go into the dungeons where the saints of God were shut up, because of the

rigidity of their lives and the peculiar straitness of their conversation. Never were men more heavenly-minded than the Puritans ; and what Puritan can you find that holds any other doctrine than that which I preach to-day ? You may find some modern doctor who teaches the reverse, but march through centuries, and with few exceptions, where are the saints who denied the Election of God ? The banner has been passed from one hand to the other. Martyrs died for it ! they sealed the truth with their blood. And this truth shall stand when rolling years shall cease to move ; this truth which shall be believed when every error and superstition shall crumble to the dust from which they sprang.

But I come back to my proof. It is laid down as a matter of theory that this doctrine is licentious. We oppose that theory. The fitness of things proves that it is not so. Election teaches that God hath chosen some to be kings and priests to God. When a man believes that he is chosen to be a king, would it be a legitimate inference to draw from it—"I am chosen to be a king, therefore I will be a beggar ; I am chosen to sit upon a throne, therefore I will wear rags." Why, you would say, "There would be no argument, no sense in it." But there is quite as much sense in that as in your supposition, that God has chosen his people to be holy, and yet that a knowledge of this fact will make them unholy. No ! the man, knowing that a peculiar dignity has been put upon him by God, feels working in his bosom a desire to live up to his dignity. "God has loved me more than others," says he ; "then, will I love him more than others. He has put me above the rest of mankind by his sovereign grace ; let me live above them : let me be more holy : let me be more eminent in grace than any of them." If there be a man that can misuse the dignity of grace which Christ has given him, and pervert that into an argument for licentiousness, he is not to be found among us. He must be something less than man, fallen though man be, who would infer, from the fact that he has become a Son of God by God's free grace, that therefore he ought to live like a son of the devil ; or, who should say, "Because God has ordained me to be holy, therefore I will be unholy." That were the strangest, oddest, most perverted, most abominable reasoning that ever could be used. I do not believe there is a creature living that could be capable of using it.

Again, not only the fitness of things, but the thing itself proves that it is not so. Election is a separation. God has set apart him that is godly for himself, has separated a people out of the mass of mankind. Does that separation allow us to draw the inference thus :—"God has separated me, therefore, I will live as other men live." No ! if I believe that God has distinguished me by his discriminating love, and separated me, then I hear the cry, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will be a Father unto you." It were strange if the decree of separation should engender an unholy union. It cannot be. I deny, once for all, in the name of all who hold the truth—I deny solemnly, as in the presence of God, that we have any thought that because God has separated us, therefore, we ought to go and live as others live. No, God forbid. Our separation is a ground and motive for our separating altogether from sinners. I heard a man say once, "Sir, if I believed that doctrine I should live in sin." My reply to him was this, "I dare say you would ! I dare say you would !" "And why," said he, "should I more than you ?" Simply because you are a man, and I trust I am a new man in Christ Jesus. To man that is renewed by grace, there is no doctrine that could make him love sin. If a man by nature be as a swine that wallows in the mire, turn him into a sheep, and there is no doctrine you can teach that can make him go and wallow in the mire again. His nature is changed. There is a raven transformed into a dove. I will give the dove to you, and you may teach it whatever you like, but that dove will not eat carrion any more. It cannot endure it : its nature is entirely changed. Here is a lion roaring for its prey. I will change it into a lamb ; and I defy you to make that lamb, by any doctrine, go and redden its lips with blood. It cannot do it—its nature is changed. A friend on board the steamboat, when we were coming across from Ireland, asked one of the sailors, "Would you like a nigger song ?" "No," said he, "I do not like such things." "Would you like a dance ?" "No," said he, "I have a religion that allows me to swear and be drunk as often as ever I please, and that is never : for I hate all such things with perfect hatred." Christian men keep from sin because their nature abhors sin. Do not imagine we are kept back from sin because we are terrified with threats of damnation ; we have no fear, except the fear of offending our loving Father. But we do not want to sin—our thirst is for holiness and not for vice. But if you have a kind of religion that always keeps you in restraint, so that you say, "I should like to go to the theatre to-night if I dare,"—if that is what you say, depend upon it, your religion is not of much value. You must have a religion that makes you hate the thing you once loved, and love that which you once hated—a religion that draws you out of your old life and puts you into a new life. Now, if a man has a new nature,

what doctrine of Election can make that new nature act contrary to its instincts ! Teach the man what you will, that man will not turn again to vanity. The Election of God gives a new nature : so, even if the doctrine were dangerous, the new nature would keep it in check.

But once more, bring me hither the *man*—man shall I call him ?—bring me the beast or devil that would say, “God has set his love upon me from before all worlds ; my name is on Jesus’ heart ; he bought me with his blood ; my sins are all forgiven ; I shall see God’s face with joy and acceptance ; therefore, I hate God, therefore I live in sin.” Bring me up the monster, I say ; and when you have brought up such-an-one, even then I will not admit that there is reason in that vile lie, that damnable calumny, which you have cast upon this doctrine, that it makes men live in licentiousness. There is no truth that can so nerve a man to piety as the fact that he was chosen of God ere time begun. Loved by thee with an unlimited love that never moves, and that endures to the end—O my God ! I desire to spend myself in thy service.

“Love, so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my soul, my all,”

and gratitude to God ; for this rich mercy constrains us, compels us to walk in the fear of God, and to love and serve him all our lives.

Now, two lessons, and then I will send you away.

The first lesson is this : Christian men and women, chosen of God and ordained unto salvation, recollect that this is a doctrine everywhere spoken against. Do not hide it, do not conceal it, for remember Christ has said, “He that is ashamed of my words, of him will I be ashamed.” But take care that you do not dishonour it. Be ye holy, even as he is holy. He has called you ; stand by your calling, give diligence to make your calling and election sure. Put on as the elect of God, bowels of compassion, holiness and love ; and let the world see that God’s chosen ones are made by grace, the choicest of men, who live nearer to Christ, and are more like Christ, than any other people upon the face of the earth. And let me add to you, if the world sneers at you, you can look your enemy in the face and never tremble. For this is a degree of nobility, a patent of divine dignity which you never need blush for, but which will keep you from ever being a coward, or bowing your knee before pomp and station, when they are associated with vice. This doctrine has never been liked, because it is a hammer against tyrants. Men have chosen their own elect ones, their kings, dukes, and earls, and God’s election interferes with them. There are some that will not bow the knee to Baal, who hold themselves to be God’s true aristocracy, who will not resign their consciences to the dictation of another. Men rail, and rave, and rage because this doctrine makes a good man strong in his loins, and will not let him bend his knee, or turn back and be a coward. Those Ironsides were made mighty because they held themselves to be no mean men. They bowed before God, but before men they could not and would not bow. Stand fast, therefore, in this your liberty, and be not moved from the hope of your calling.

One other word of exhortation ; it is the second lesson. There are some of you who are making an excuse out of the doctrine of Election, an excuse, an apology for your own unbelieving and wicked hearts. Now, remember the doctrine of Election exercises no constraint whatever upon you. If you are wicked you are so because you will be so. If you reject the Saviour you do so because you will do so. The doctrine does not make you reject him. You may make it an excuse, but it is an idle one ; it is a cobweb garment that will be rent away at the last day. I beseech you lay it aside, and remember that the truth with which you have to do is this, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” If you believe, you are saved. If you trust Christ, be you who you may, or what you may, the wide world over, you are a saved man. Do not say, “I will not believe because I do not know whether I am elected.” You cannot know that until you have believed. Your business is with believing. “Whosoever”—there is no limitation in it—“Whosoever believeth in Christ shall be saved.” You, as well as any other man. If you trust Christ, your sins shall be forgiven, your iniquities blotted out. O may the Holy Spirit breathe the new life into you. Bowing the knee, I beseech you, kiss the Son lest he be angry. Receive his mercy now, steel not your hearts against the gracious influence of his love ; but yield to him, and you shall then find that you yielded because he made you yield ; that you came to him because he drew you ; and that he drew you because he had loved you with an everlasting love.

May God command his blessing for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE SIN OF UNBELIEF.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 14, 1855, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"And that lord answered the man of God, and said, Now, behold, if the Lord should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes but shalt not eat thereof."—2 Kings vii. 19.

ONE wise man may deliver a whole city; one good man may be the means of safety to a thousand others. The holy ones are "the salt of the earth," the means of the preservation of the wicked. Without the godly as a conserve, the race would be utterly destroyed. In the city of Samaria there was one righteous man—Elisha, the servant of the Lord. Piety was altogether extinct in the court. The king was a sinner of the blackest dye, his iniquity was glaring and infamous. Jehoram walked in the ways of his father Ahab, and made unto himself false gods. The people of Samaria were fallen like their monarch: they had gone astray from Jehovah; they had forsaken the God of Israel; they remembered not the watchword of Jacob, "The Lord thy God is one God;" and in wicked idolatry they bowed before the idols of the heathens, and therefore the Lord of Hosts suffered their enemies to oppress them until the curse of Ebal was fulfilled in the streets of Samaria, for "the tender and delicate woman who would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness," had an evil eye to her own children, and devoured her offspring by reason of fierce hunger. Dent. xxviii. 56-58. In this awful extremity the one holy man was the medium of salvation. The one grain of salt preserved the entire city; the one warrior for God was the means of the deliverance of the whole beleaguered multitude. For Elisha's sake, the Lord sent the promise, that the next day, food which could not be obtained at any price, should be had at the cheapest possible rate—at the very gates of Samaria. We may picture the joy of the multitude when first the seer uttered this prediction. They knew him to be a prophet of the Lord; he had divine credentials; all his past prophecies had been fulfilled. They knew that he was a man sent of God, and uttering Jehovah message. Surely the monarch's eyes would glisten with delight, and the emaciated multitude would leap for joy, at the prospects of so speedy a release from famine. "To-morrow," would they shout, "*to-morrow* our hunger shall be over, and we shall feast to the full."

However, the lord on whom the king leaned, expressed his disbelief. We hear not that any of the common people, the plebeians, ever did so; but an aristocrat did it. Strange it is, that God has seldom chosen the great men of this world. High places and faith in Christ do seldom well agree. This great man said, "Impossible!" and, with an insult to the prophet, he added, "If the Lord should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be." His sin lay in the fact, that after repeated seals of Elisha's ministry, he yet disbelieved the assurances uttered by the prophet on God's behalf. He had, doubtless, seen the marvellous defeat of Moab; he had been startled at tidings of the resurrection of the Shunamite's son; he knew that Elisha had revealed Benhadad's secrets and smitten his marauding hosts with blindness; he had seen the bands of Syria decoyed into the heart of Samaria; and he probably knew the story of the widow, whose oil filled all the vessels, and redeemed her sons; at all events the cure of Naaman was common

conversation at court; and yet, in the face of all this accumulated evidence, in the teeth of all these credentials of the prophet's mission, he yet doubted, and insultingly told him that heaven must become an open casement, ere the promise could be performed. Whereupon God pronounced his doom by the mouth of the man, who had just now proclaimed the promise: "thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof." And providence—which always fulfils prophecy, just as the paper takes the stamp of the type—destroyed the man. Trodden down in the streets of Samaria, he perished at its gates, beholding the plenty, but tasting not of it. Perhaps his carriage was haughty, and insulting to the people; or he tried to restrain their eager rush; or, as we would say, it might have been by mere accident that he was crushed to death; so that he saw the prophecy fulfilled, but never lived to enjoy it. In his case, seeing was believing, but it was not enjoying.

I shall this morning invite your attention to two things—the man's *sin* and his *punishment*. Perhaps I shall say but little of this man, since I have detailed the circumstances, but I shall discourse upon the sin of unbelief and the punishment thereof.

I. And first, the *SIN*. His sin was *unbelief*. He doubted the promise of God. In this particular case unbelief took the form of a doubt of the divine veracity, or a mistrust of God's power. Either he doubted whether God really meant what he said, or whether it was within the range of possibility that God should fulfil his promise. Unbelief hath more phases than the moon, and more colors than the chameleon. Common people say of the devil, that he is seen sometimes in one shape, and sometimes in another. I am sure this is true of Satan's first-born child—unbelief, for its forms are legion. At one time I see unbelief dressed out as an angel of light. It calls itself humility, and it saith, "I would not be presumptuous; I dare not think that God would pardon me; I am too great a sinner." We call that humility, and thank God that our friend is in so good a condition. I do not thank God for any such delusion. It is the devil dressed as an angel of light; it is unbelief after all. At other times we detect unbelief in the shape of a doubt of God's immutability: "The Lord has loved me, but perhaps he will cast me off to-morrow. He helped me yesterday, and under the shadows of his wings I trust; but perhaps I shall receive no help in the next affliction. He may have cast me off; he may be unmindful of his covenant, and forget to be gracious." Sometimes this infidelity is embodied in a doubt of God's power. We see every day new straits, we are involved in a net of difficulties, and we think "surely the Lord cannot deliver us." We strive to get rid of our burden, and finding that we cannot do it, we think God's arm is as short as ours, and his power as little as human might. A fearful form of unbelief is that doubt which keeps men from coming to Christ; which leads the sinner to distrust the ability of Christ to save him, to doubt the willingness of Jesus to accept so great a transgressor. But the most hideous of all is the traitor, in its true colours, blaspheming God, and madly denying his existence. Infidelity, deism, and atheism, are the ripe fruits of this pernicious tree; they are the most terrific eruptions of the volcano of unbelief. Unbelief hath become of full stature, when quitting the mask and laying aside disguise, it profanely stalks the earth, uttering the rebellious cry, "No God," striving in vain to shake the throne of the divinity, by lifting up its arm against Jehovah, and in its arrogance would

"Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,
Re-judge his justice—be the god of God."

Then truly unbelief has come to its full perfection, and then you see what it really is, for the least unbelief is of the same nature as the greatest.

I am astonished, and I am sure you will be, when I tell you that there are some strange people in the world who do not believe that unbelief is a sin. Strange people I must call them, because they are sound in their faith in every other respect; only, to make the articles of their creed consistent, as they imagine, they deny that unbelief is sinful. I remember a young man going into a circle of friends and ministers, who were disputing whether it was a *sin* in men that they did not believe the gospel. Whilst they were discussing it, he said, "Gentlemen **am** I in the presence of Christians? Are you believers in the Bible, or are you

not?" They said, "We are Christians of course." "Then," said he, "does not the Scripture say, 'of sin, because they believed not on me?' And is it not the damning sin of sinners, that they do not believe on Christ?" I could not have thought that persons should be so fool-hardy as to venture to assert that, "it is no sin for a sinner not to believe on Christ." I thought that, however far they might wish to push their sentiments, they would not tell a lie to uphold the truth, and, in my opinion, this is what such men are really doing. Truth is a strong tower, and never requires to be buttressed with error. God's Word will stand against all man's devices. I would never invent a sophism to prove that it is no sin on the part of the ungodly not to believe, for I am sure it is, when I am taught in the Scriptures that, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light," and when I read, "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he believeth not on the Son of God," I affirm, and the Word declares it, *unbelief is a sin*. Surely with rational and unprejudiced persons, it cannot require any reasoning to prove it. Is it not a sin for a creature to doubt the word of its Maker? Is it not a crime and an insult to the Divinity, for me, an atom, a particle of dust, to dare to deny his words? Is it not the very summit of arrogance and extremity of pride for a son of Adam to say, even in his heart, "God I doubt thy grace; God I doubt thy love; God I doubt thy power?" Oh! sirs believe me, could ye roll all sins into one mass,—could you take murder, and blasphemy, and lust, adultery, and fornication, and everything that is vile, and unite them all into one vast globe of black corruption, they would not equal even then the sin of unbelief. This is the monarch sin, the quintessence of guilt; the mixture of the venom of all crimes; the dregs of the wine of Gomorrah; it is the A 1 sin, the master-piece of Satan, the chief work of the devil.

I shall attempt this morning, for a little while, to shew the extremely evil nature of the sin of unbelief.

1. And first the sin of unbelief will appear to be extremely heinous when we remember that *it is the parent of every other iniquity*. There is no crime which unbelief will not beget. I think that the fall of man is very much owing to it. It was in this point that the devil tempted Eve. He said to her, "Yea, *hath* God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" He whispered and insinuated a doubt, "Yea, *hath* God said so?" as much as to say, "Are you *quite* sure he said so?" It was by means of unbelief—that thin part of the wedge—that the other sin entered; curiosity and the rest followed; she touched the fruit, and destruction came into this world. Since that time, unbelief has been the prolific parent of all guilt. An unbeliever is capable of the vilest crime that ever was committed. Unbelief, sirs! why it hardened the heart of Pharaoh—it gave license to the tongue of blaspheming Rabshekah—yea, it became a deicide, and murdered Jesus. Unbelief!—it has sharpened the knife of the suicide! it has mixed many a cup of poison; thousands it has brought to the halter; and many to a shameful grave, who have murdered themselves and rushed with bloody hands before their Creator's tribunal, because of unbelief. Give me an unbeliever—let me know that he doubts God's word—let me know that he distrusts his promise and his threatening; and with that for a premise, I will conclude that the man shall, by-and-bye, unless there is amazing restraining power exerted upon him, be guilty of the foulest and blackest crimes. Ah! this is a Beelzebub sin; like Beelzebub, it is the leader of all evil spirits. It is said of Jeroboam that he sinned and made Israel to sin; and it may be said of unbelief that it not only sins itself, but makes others sin; it is the egg of all crime, the seed of every offence; in fact everything that is evil and vile lies couched in that one word—unbelief.

And let me say here, that unbelief in the Christian is of the self-same nature as unbelief in the sinner. It is not the same in its final issue, for it will be pardoned in the Christian; yea it is pardoned: it was laid upon the scape-goat's head of old: it was blotted out and atoned for; but it is of the same sinful nature. In fact, if there can be one sin more heinous than the unbelief of a sinner, it is the unbelief of a saint. For a saint to doubt God's word—for a saint to distrust God after innumerable instances of his love, after ten thousand proofs of his mercy, exceeds everything. In a saint, moreover, unbelief is the root of other sins. When I am perfect in faith, I shall be perfect in everything else; I should always fulfil the precept, if I always believed the promise. But it is because my faith is weak,

that I sin. Put me in trouble, and if I can fold my arms and say, "Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord will provide," you will not find me using wrong means to escape from it. But let me be in temporal distress and difficulty; if I distrust God, what then? Perhaps I shall steal, or do a dishonest act to get out of the hands of my creditors; or if kept from such a transgression, I may plunge into excess to drown my anxieties. Once take away faith, the reins are broken; and who can ride an unbroken steed without rein or bridle? Like the chariot of the sun, with Phaëton for its driver, such should we be without faith. Unbelief is the mother of vice; it is the parent of sin; and, therefore, I say it is a pestilent evil—a master sin.

2. But secondly; *unbelief not only begets, but fosters sin.* How is it that men can keep their sin under the thunders of the Sinai preacher? How is it that, when Boanerges stands in the pulpit, and, by the grace of God, cries aloud, "Cursed is every man that keepeth not all the commands of the law,"—how is it that when the sinner hears the tremendous threatenings of God's justice, still he is hardened, and walks on in his evil ways? I will tell you; it is because unbelief of that threatening prevents it from having any effect upon him. When our sappers and miners go to work around Sebastopol, they could not work in front of the walls, if they had not something to keep off the shots; so they raise earthworks, behind which they can do what they please. So with the ungodly man. The devil gives him unbelief; he thus puts up an earthwork, and finds refuge behind it. Ah! sinners, when once the Holy Ghost knocks down your unbelief—when once he brings home the truth in demonstration and in power, how the law will work upon your soul. If man did but believe that the law is holy, that the commandments are holy, just, and good, how he would be shaken over hell's mouth; there would be no sitting and sleeping in God's house; no careless hearers; no going away and straightway forgetting what manner of men ye are. Oh! once get rid of unbelief, how would every ball from the batteries of the law fall upon the sinner, and the slain of the Lord would be many. Again, how is it that men can hear the wooings of the cross of Calvary, and yet come not to Christ? How is it that when we preach about the sufferings of Jesus, and close up by saying, "yet there is room,"—how is it that when we dwell upon his cross and passion, men are not broken in their hearts? It is said,

"Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone :
But a sense of blood-bought pardon
Will dissolve a heart of stone."

Methinks the tale of Calvary is enough to break a rock. Rocks did rend when they saw Jesus die. Methinks the tragedy of Golgotha is enough to make a flint gush with tears, and to make the most hardened wretch weep out his eyes in drops of penitential love; but yet we tell it you, and repeat it oft, but who weeps over it? Who cares about it? Sirs, ye sit as unconcerned as if it did not signify to you. Oh! behold and see all ye that pass by. Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die? Ye seem to say "It is nothing." What is the reason? Because there is unbelief between you and the cross. If there were not that thick veil between you and the Saviour's eyes, his looks of love would melt you. But unbelief is the sin which keeps the power of the gospel from working in the sinner: and it is not till the Holy Ghost strikes that unbelief out—it is not till the Holy Spirit rends away that infidelity and takes it altogether down, that we can find the sinner coming to put his trust in Jesus.

3. But there is a third point. *Unbelief disables a man for the performance of any good work.* "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," is a great truth in more senses than one. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." You shall never hear me say a word against morality; you shall never hear me say that honesty is not a good thing, or that sobriety is not a good thing; on the contrary, I would say they are commendable things; but I will tell you what I will say afterwards—I will tell you that they are just like the cowries of Hindostan; they may pass current among the Indians, but they will not do in England; these virtues may be current here below, but not above. If you have not something better than your own goodness, you will never get to heaven. Some of the Indian

tribes use little strips of cloth instead of money, and I would not find fault with them if I lived there; but when I come to England, strips of cloth will not suffice. So honesty, sobriety, and such things, may be very good amongst men—and the more you have of them the better. I exhort you, whatsoever things are lovely and pure, and of good report, have them—but they will not do up there. All these things put together, without faith, do not please God. Virtues without faith are whitewashed sins. Obedience without faith, if it is possible, is a gilded disobedience. Not to believe, nullifies everything. It is the fly in the ointment; it is the poison in the pot. Without faith, with all the virtues of purity, with all the benevolence of philanthropy, with all the kindness of disinterested sympathy, with all the talents of genius, with all the bravery of patriotism, and with all the decision of principle—"without faith it is impossible to please God." Do you not see then, how bad unbelief is, because it prevents men from performing good works. Yea, even in Christians themselves, unbelief disables them. Let me just tell you a tale—a story of Christ's life. A certain man had an afflicted son, possessed with an evil spirit. Jesus was up in Mount Tabor, transfigured; so the father brought his son to the disciples. What did the disciples do? They said, "Oh, we will cast him out." They put their hands upon him, and they tried to do it; but they whispered among themselves and said, "We are afraid we shall not be able." By-and-bye the diseased man began to froth at the mouth; he foamed and scratched the earth, claspings it in his paroxysms. The demoniac spirit within him was alive. The devil was still there. In vain their repeated exorcism, the evil spirit remained like a lion in his den, nor could their efforts dislodge him. "Go!" said they; but he went not. "Away to the pit!" they cried; but he remained immovable. The lips of unbelief cannot affright the Evil One, who might well have said, "Faith I know, Jesus I know, but who are ye? ye have no faith." If they had had faith, as a grain of mustard seed, they might have cast the devil out; but their faith was gone, and therefore they could do nothing. Look at poor Peter's case, too. While he had faith, Peter walked on the waves of the sea. That was a splendid walk; I almost envy him treading upon the billows. Why, if Peter's faith had continued, he might have walked across the Atlantic to America. But presently there came a billow behind him, and he said, "That will sweep me away;" and then another before, and he cried out, "That will overwhelm me;" and he thought—how could I be so presumptuous as to be walking on the top of these waves? Down goes Peter. Faith was Peter's life-buoy; faith was Peter's charm—it kept him up; but unbelief sent him down. Do you know that you and I, all our lifetime, will have to walk on the water? A Christian's life is always walking on water—mine is—and every wave would swallow and devour him, but faith makes him stand. The moment you cease to believe, that moment distress comes in, and down you go. Oh! wherefore dost thou doubt, then?

Faith fosters every virtue; unbelief murders every one. Thousands of prayers have been strangled in their infancy by unbelief. Unbelief has been guilty of infanticide; it has murdered many an infant petition; many a song of praise that would have swelled the chorus of the skies, has been stifled by an unbelieving murmur; many a noble enterprise conceived in the heart has been blighted ere it could come forth, by unbelief. Many a man would have been a missionary; would have stood and preached his Master's gospel boldly; but he had unbelief. Once make a giant unbelieving, and he becomes a dwarf. Faith is the Samsonian lock of the Christian; cut it off, and you may put out his eyes—and he can do nothing.

4. Our next remark is—*unbelief has been severely punished.* Turn you to the Scriptures! I see a world all fair and beautiful; its mountains laughing in the sun, and the fields rejoicing in the golden light. I see maidens dancing, and young men singing. How fair the vision! But lo! a grave and reverend sire lifts up his hand, and cries, "A flood is coming to deluge the earth: the fountains of the great deep will be broken up, and all things will be covered. See yonder ark! One hundred and twenty years have I toiled with these my hands to build it; flee there, and you are safe." "Aha! old man; away with your empty predictions! Aha! let us be happy while we may! when the flood comes, then we will build an ark; but there is no flood coming; tell that to fools; we believe no such things." See the unbelievers pursue their merry dance. Hark! Unbeliever. Dost thou not

hear that rumbling noise? Earth's bowels have begun to move, her rocky ribs are strained by dire convulsions from within; lo! they break with the enormous strain, and forth from between them torrents rush unknown since God concealed them in the bosom of our world. Heaven is split in sunder! it rains. Not drops, but clouds descend. A cataract, like that of old Niagara, rolls from heaven with mighty noise. Both firmaments, both deeps—the deep below and the deep above—do clasp their hands. Now unbelievers, where are you now? There is your last remnant. A man—his wife clasping him round the waist—stands on the last summit that is above the water. See him there? The water is up to his loins even now. Hear his last shriek! He is floating—he is drowned. And as Noah looks from the ark he sees nothing. Nothing! It is a void profound. "Sea monsters whelp and stable in the palaces of kings." All is overthrown, covered, drowned. What hath done it? What brought the flood upon the earth? Unbelief. By faith Noah escaped from the flood. By unbelief the rest were drowned.

And, oh! do you not know that unbelief kept Moses and Aaron out of Canaan? They honored not God; they struck the rock when they ought to have spoken to it. They disbelieved: and therefore the punishment came upon them, that they should not inherit that good land, for which they had toiled and labored.

Let me take you where Moses and Aaron dwelt—to the vast and howling wilderness. We will walk about it for a time; sons of the weary foot, we will become like the wandering Bedouins, we will tread the desert for a while. There lies a carcass whitened in the sun; there another, and there another. What means these bleached bones? What are these bodies—there a man, and there a woman? What are all these? How came these corpses here? Surely some grand encampment must have been here cut off in a single night by a blast, or by bloodshed. Ah; no, no. Those bones are the bones of Israel; those skeletons are the old tribes of Jacob. They could not enter because of unbelief. They trusted not in God. Spies said they could not conquer the land. Unbelief was the cause of their death. It was not the Anakims that destroyed Israel; it was not the howling wilderness which devoured them; it was not the Jordan which proved a barrier to Canaan; neither Hivite or Jebusite slew them; it was unbelief alone which kept them out of Canaan. What a doom to be pronounced on Israel, after forty years of journeying: they could not enter because of unbelief!

Not to multiply instances, recollect Zechariah. He doubted, and the angel struck him dumb. His mouth was closed because of unbelief. But oh! if you would have the worst picture of the effects of unbelief—if you would see how God has punished it, I must take you to the siege of Jerusalem, that worst massacre which time has ever seen; when the Romans raised the walls to the ground, and put the whole of the inhabitants to the sword, or sold them as slaves in the market-place. Have you never read of the destruction of Jerusalem, by Titus? Did you never turn to the tragedy of Masada, when the Jews stabbed each other rather than fall into the hands of the Romans? Do you not know, that to this day the Jew walks through the earth a wanderer, without a home and without a land? He is cut off, as a branch is cut from a vine; and why? Because of unbelief. Each time ye see a Jew with a sad and sombre countenance—each time ye mark him like a denizen of another land, treading as an exile this our country—each time ye see him, pause and say, "Ah! it was unbelief which caused thee to murder Christ, and now it has driven thee to be a wanderer; and faith alone—faith in the crucified Nazarene—can fetch thee back to thy country, and restore it to its ancient grandeur." Unbelief, you see, has the Cain-mark upon its forehead. God hates it; God has dealt hard blows upon it: and God will ultimately crush it. Unbelief dishonors God. Every other crime touches God's territory; but unbelief aims a blow at his divinity, impeaches his veracity, denies his goodness, blasphemes his attributes, maligns his character; therefore, God of all things, hates first and chiefly, unbelief, wherever it is.

5. And now to close this point—for I have been already too long—let me remark that you will observe the heinous nature of unbelief in this—that *it is the damning sin*. There is one sin for which Christ never died; it is the sin against the Holy Ghost. There is one other sin for which Christ never made atonement. Mention every crime in the calendar of evil, and I will show you persons who have found forgiveness for it. But ask me whether the man who died in unbelief can be saved,

and I reply there is no atonement for that man. There is an atonement made for the unbelief of a Christian, because it is temporary; but the final unbelief—the unbelief with which men die—never was atoned for. You may turn over this whole Book, and you will find that there is no atonement for the man who died in unbelief; there is no mercy for him. Had he been guilty of every other sin, if he had but believed, he would have been pardoned; but this is the damning exception—he had no faith. Devils seize him! O fiends of the pit, drag him downward to his doom! He is faithless and unbelieving, and such are the tenants for whom hell was built. It is *their* portion, *their* prison, they are the chief prisoners, the fetters are marked with their names, and for ever shall they know that, “he that believeth not shall be damned.”

II. This brings us now to conclude with the PUNISHMENT. “Thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.” Listen unbelievers! ye have heard this morning your sin; now listen to your doom: “Ye shall see it with your eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.” It is so often with God’s own saints. When they are unbelieving, they see the mercy with their eyes, but do not eat it. Now, here is corn in this land of Egypt; but there are some of God’s saints who come here on the Sabbath, and say, “I do not know whether the Lord will be with me or not.” Some of them say, “Well, the gospel is preached, but I do not know whether it will be successful.” They are always doubting and fearing. Listen to them when they get out of the chapel. “Well, did you get a good meal this morning?” “Nothing for me.” Of course not. Ye could see it with your eyes, but did not eat it, because you had no faith. If you had come up with faith, you would have had a morsel. I have found Christians, who have grown so very critical, that if the whole portion of the meat they are to have, in due season, is not cut up exactly into square pieces, and put upon some choice dish of porcelain, they cannot eat it. Then they ought to go without; and they will have to go without, until they are brought to their appetites. They will have some affliction, which will act like quinine upon them: they will be made to eat by means of bitters in their mouths; they will be put in prison for a day or two until their appetite returns, and then they will be glad to eat the most ordinary food, off the most common platter, or no platter at all. But the real reason why God’s people do not feed under a gospel ministry, is, because they have not faith. If you believed, if you did but hear one promise, that would be enough; if you only heard one good thing from the pulpit, here would be food for your soul, for it is not the quantity we hear, but the quantity we believe, that does us good—it is that which we receive into our hearts with true and lively faith, that is our profit.

But, let me apply this chiefly to the unconverted. They often see great works of God done with their eyes, but they do not eat thereof. A crowd of people have come here this morning to see with their eyes, but I doubt whether all of them eat. Men cannot eat with their eyes, for if they could, most would be well fed. And, spiritually, persons cannot feed simply with their ears, nor simply with looking at the preacher; and so we find the majority of our congregations come just to see; “Ah, let us hear what this babbler would say, this reed shaken in the wind.” But they have no faith; they come, and they see, and see, and see, and never eat. There is some one in the front there, who gets converted; and some one down below, who is called by sovereign grace; some poor sinner is weeping under a sense of his blood-guiltiness; another is crying for mercy to God: and another is saying, “Have mercy upon me, a sinner.” A great work is going on in this chapel, but some of you do not know anything about it; you have no work going on in your hearts, and why? Because ye think it is impossible; ye think God is not at work. He has not promised to work for you who do not honor him. Unbelief makes you sit here in times of revival, and of the outpouring of God’s grace, unmoved, uncalled, unsaved.

But, sirs, the worst fulfilment of this doom is to come! Good Whitfield used sometimes to lift up both his hands and shout, as I wish I could shout, but my voice fails me. “The wrath to come! the wrath to come!” It is not the wrath now you have to fear, but the wrath to come; and there shall be a doom to come, when “ye shall see it with your eyes, but shall not eat thereof.” Methinks I see the last great day. The last hour of time has struck. I heard the bell toll its death knell—time was, eternity is ushered in; the sea is boiling; the waves are

lit up with supernatural splendour. I see a rainbow—a flying cloud, and on it there is a throne, and on that throne sits one like unto the Son of Man. I know him. In his hand he holds a pair of balances; just before him the books,—the book of life, the book of death, the book of remembrance. I see his splendour, and I rejoice at it; I behold his pompous appearance, and I smile with gladness that he is come to be “admired of all his saints.” But there stands a throng of miserable wretches, crouching in horror to conceal themselves, and yet looking, for their eyes must look on him whom they have pierced; but when they look they cry, “Hide me from the face.” What face? “Rocks, hide me from the face.” What ace? “The face of Jesus, the man who died, but now is come to judgment.” But ye cannot be hidden from his face; ye must see it with your eyes: but ye will not sit on the right hand, dressed in robes of grandeur; and when the triumphal procession of Jesus in the clouds shall come, ye shall not march in it; ye shall see it, but ye shall not be there. Oh! methinks I see it now, the mighty Saviour in his chariot, riding on the rainbow to heaven. See how his mighty coursers make the sky rattle while he drives them up heaven’s hill. A train girt in white follow behind him, and at his chariot wheels he drags the devil, death, and hell. Hark, how they clap their hands. Hark, how they shout. “Thou hast ascended up on high; thou hast led captivity captive.” Hark, how they chaunt the solemn lay, “Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” See the splendour of their appearance; mark the crown upon their brows; see their snow-white garments; mark the rapture of their countenances; hear how their song swells up to heaven while the Eternal joins therein, saying, “I will rejoice over them with joy. I will rejoice over them with singiug, for I have betrothed thee unto me in everlasting lovingkindness.” But where are you all the while? Ye can see them up there, but where are you? Looking at it with your eyes, but you cannot eat thereof. The marriage banquet is spread; the good old wines of eternity are broached; they sit down to the feast of the king; but there are you, miserable, and famishing, and ye cannot eat thereof. Oh! how ye wring your hands. Might ye but have one morsel from the table—might ye but be dogs beneath the table. You shall be a dog in hell, but not a dog in heaven.

→ But to conclude. Methinks I see thee in some place in hell, tied to a rock, the vulture of remorse gnawing thy heart; and up there is Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom. You lift up your eyes and you see who it is. “That is the poor man who lay on my dunghill, and the dogs licked his sores; there he is in heaven, while I am cast down. Lazarus—yes, it is Lazarus; and I who was rich in the world of time am here in hell. Father Abraham, send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue.” But no! it cannot be; it cannot be. And whilst you lie there, if there be one thing in hell worse than another, it will be seeing the saints in heaven. Oh, to think of seeing my mother in heaven while I am cast out! Oh, sinner, only think, to see thy brother in heaven—he who was rocked in the selfsame cradle, and played beneath the same roof-tree—yet thou art cast out. And, husband, there is thy wife in heaven, and thou art amongst the damned. And seest thou, father! thy child is before the throne; and thou! accursed of God and accursed of man, art in hell. Oh, the hell of hells will be to see our friends in heaven, and ourselves lost. I beseech you, my hearers, by the death of Christ—by his agony and bloody sweat—by his cross and passion—by all that is holy—by all that is sacred in heaven and earth—by all that is solemn in time or eternity—by all that is horrible in hell, or glorious in heaven—by that awful thought, “for ever,”—I beseech you lay these things to heart, and remember that if you are damned, it will be unbelief that damns you. If you are lost, it will be because ye believed not on Christ; and if you perish, this shall be the bitterest drop of gall—that ye did not trust in the Saviour.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 16, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin."—John xv. 22.

THE peculiar sin of the Jews, the sin which aggravated above everything their former iniquities, was their rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. He had been very plainly described in the books of the prophets, and they who waited for him, such as Simeon and Anna, no sooner beheld him, even in his infant state, than they rejoiced to see him, and understood that God had sent forth his salvation. But because Jesus Christ did not answer the expectation of that evil generation, because he did not come arrayed in pomp and clothed with power, because he had not the outward garnishing of a prince and the honours of a king, they shut their eyes against him; he was "a root out of a dry ground," he was "despised and they esteemed him not." Nor did their sin stop there. Not content with denying his Messiahship, they were exceeding hot against him in their anger; they hunted him all his life, seeking his blood; nor were they content till their fiendish malice had been fully glutted by sitting down at the foot of the cross, and watching the dying throes and the expiring agonies of their crucified Messiah. Though over the cross itself the words were written, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," yet they knew not their king, God's everlasting Son; and knowing him not, they crucified him, "for had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

Now, the sin of the Jews is every day repeated by the Gentiles; that which they did once, many have done every day. Are there not many of you now present this day, listening to my voice, who forget the Messiah? You do not trouble yourself to deny him; you would not degrade yourselves, in what is called a Christian country, by standing up to blaspheme his name. Perhaps you hold the right doctrine concerning him, and believe him to be the Son of God as well as the Son of Mary; but still you neglect his claims, and give him no honour, and do not accept him as worthy of your trust. He is not your Redeemer; you are not looking for his second advent, nor are you expecting to be saved through his blood; nay, even worse, ye are this day crucifying him; for know ye not, that as many as put away from them the gospel of Christ, do crucify the Lord afresh and open wide his wounds? As often as ye hear the Word preached and reject it, as often as ye are warned, and stifle the voice of your conscience, as often as ye are made to tremble, and yet say, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season, I will send for thee," so often do you in effect grasp the hammer and the nail, and once more pierce the hand, and make the blood issue from the side. And there are other ways by which you wound him through his members. As often as ye despise his ministers, or cast stumbling blocks in the way of his servants, or impede his gospel by your evil example, or by your hard words seek to pervert the seeker from the way of truth, so often do you commit that great iniquity which brought the curse upon the Jew, and which hath doomed him to wander through the earth, until the day of the second advent, when *he* shall come, who

shall even by the Jew be acknowledged the King of the Jews, for whom both Jew and Gentile are now looking with anxious expectation, even Messias, the Prince who came once to suffer, but who comes again to reign.

And now I shall endeavour this morning to show the parallel between your case and that of the Jew; not doing so in set phrase, but yet incidentally, as God shall help me; appealing to your conscience, and making you feel that in rejecting Christ, you commit the same sin and incur the same doom. We shall note, first of all, *the excellence of the ministry, since Christ comes in it, and speaks to men*: "If I had not spoken to them." We shall notice, secondly, *the aggravation of sin caused by the rejection of Christ's message*: "If I had not spoken to them they had not had sin." Thirdly, *the death of all excuses, caused by the preaching of the Word*: "Now they have no cloke for their sin." And then, in the last place, we shall briefly, but very solemnly announce *the fearfully aggravated doom of those who thus reject the Saviour, and increase their guilt by despising him*.

I. In the first place, then, this morning it is ours to say, and to say truly too, that IN THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL, THERE IS TO MAN'S CONSCIENCE THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE SPEAKING OF THE SAVIOUR THROUGH US. When Israel of old despised Moses and murmured against him, Moses meekly said, "Ye have not murmured against us, but ye have murmured against the Lord God of Israel." And truly the minister may, with Scripture warrant, say the same: he that despiseth us, despiseth not us, but him that sent us; he who rejecteth the message rejecteth not what we say, but rejecteth the message of the everlasting God. The minister is but a man; he has no priestly power, but he is a man called out of the rest of mankind, and endowed with the Holy Spirit, to speak to his fellow-men; and when he preacheth the truth as with power sent down from heaven, God owns him by calling him his ambassador, and puts him in the high and responsible position of a watchman on the walls of Zion, and he bids all men take heed that a faithful message, faithfully delivered, when despised and trampled on, amounts to rebellion against God, and to sin and iniquity against the Most High. As for what I may say, as a man, it is but little that I should say it; but if I speak as the Lord's ambassador, take heed that ye slight not the message. It is the Word of God sent down from heaven which we preach with the power of the Holy Spirit, earnestly beseeching you to believe it, and remember, it is at the peril of your own souls that you put it from you, for it is not we that speak, but the Spirit of the Lord our God who speaketh in us. With what a solemnity does this invest the gospel ministry! O ye sons of men, the ministry is not the speaking of men, but the speaking of God through men. As many as are the real called and sent servants of God, are not the authors of their message; but they first hear it from the Master, and they speak it to the people; and they see ever before their eyes these solemn words—"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee;" and they hear behind them this awful threatening—"If thou warn them not they shall perish, but their blood will I require at thine hand." Oh! that ye might see written in letters of fire before you this day the words of the prophet—"O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord;" for as far as our ministry is true and untainted by error, it is God's Word, and it hath the same right and claim to your belief as if God himself should speak it from the top of Sinai, instead of speaking it through the humble ministry of the Word of God.

And now let us pause over this doctrine, and let us ask ourselves this solemn question. Have we not all of us grossly sinned against God, in the neglect that we have often put upon the means of grace? How often have you stayed away from the house of God, when God himself was speaking there? What would have been the doom of Israel, if, when summoned on that sacred day to hear the Word of God from the top of the mountain, they had perversely rambled into the wilderness, rather than attend to hear it? And yet so have you done. You have sought your own pleasure, and listened to the syren song of temptation; but ye have shut your ear against the voice of the Most High; and when he has himself been speaking in his own house, ye have turned aside unto crooked ways, and have not regarded the voice of the Lord your God. And when ye have come up to the house of God, how often has there been the careless eye, the inattentive ear! Ye have heard as though ye heard not. Your ear has been penetrated, but the hidden man of the heart has been deaf, and you have been like the deaf adder;

charm we never so wisely, you would not listen nor regard us. God himself has spoken, too, at times in your conscience, so that you have heard it. You have stood in the aisle, and your knees have knocked together, you have sat in your pew, and while some mighty Boanerges has thundered out the word, you have heard it said, as with an angel's voice, "*Prepare to meet thy God—consider thy ways—set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live.*" And yet you have gone out of God's house, and have forgotten what manner of men you were. You have quenched the Spirit, you have done despite to the Spirit of grace; you have put far from you the struggles of your conscience; you have throttled those infant prayers that were beginning to cry in your heart; you have drowned those new-born desires that were just springing up; you have put away from you everything that was good and sacred; you have turned again to your own ways, and have once more wandered on the mountains of sin, and in the valley of iniquity. Ah! my friends, just think, then, for a moment, that *in all this you have despised God*. I am certain, if the Holy Spirit would but apply this one solemn truth to your consciences this morning, this Hall of Music would be turned into a house of mourning, and this place would become a Bochim, a place of weeping and lamentation. Oh to have despised God, to have trampled under foot the Son of Man, to have passed by his cross, to have rejected the wooings of his love and the warnings of his grace! How solemn! Did you ever think of this before? You have thought it was but despising man; will ye now think of it as despising Christ? For Christ has spoken to you. Ah! God is my witness, that oftentimes Christ hath wept with these eyes, and spoken to you with these lips. I have sought nothing but the winning of your souls. Sometimes with rough words have I endeavoured to drive you to the cross, and at other times with weeping accents have I sought to weep you to my Redeemer; and sure I am, I did not speak myself then, but Jesus spoke through me, and inasmuch as ye did hear and weep, and then went away and did forget, remember that Christ spoke to you. 'Twas he who said, "Look unto *me* and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;" 'twas he who said, "Come unto *me*, all ye that labour and are heavy laden;" 'twas he who warned you, that if you neglected this great salvation you must perish; and in having put away the warning and rejected the invitation, you have not despised us, but you have despised our Master; and woe unto you, except ye repent, for 'tis a fearful thing to have despised the voice of him that speaketh from heaven.

II. And now we must notice the second point, namely, that **THE REJECTION OF THE GOSPEL AGGRAVATES MEN'S SIN**. Now, do not let me be misunderstood. I have heard of persons who, having gone to the house of God, have been filled with a sense of sin, and at last they have been driven almost to despair, for Satan has tempted them to forsake the house of God; for says he, "The more you go, the more you increase your condemnation." Now I believe that this is an error; we do not increase our condemnation by going to the house of God; we are far more likely to increase it by stopping away; for in stopping away from the house of God there is a double rejection of Christ; you reject him even with the outward mind, as well as with the inward spirit; you neglect even the lying at the pool of Bethesda; you are worse than the man who lay at the pool, but could not get in. You will not lie there, and therefore, neglecting the hearing of the Word of God, you do indeed incur a fearful doom; but if you go up to the house of God, sincerely seeking a blessing, if you do not get comfort—if you do not find grace in the means, still, if you go there devoutly seeking it, your condemnation is not increased thereby. Your sin is not aggravated merely by the hearing of the gospel, but by the wilful and wicked rejection of it when it is heard. The man who listens to the sound of the gospel, and after having heard it, turns upon his heel with a laugh, or who, after hearing time after time, and being visibly affected, allows the cares and the pleasures of this wicked life, to come in and choke the seed—such a man does in a fearful measure increase his guilt.

And now we will just notice why, in a two-fold measure, he does this. Because, in the first place, *he gets a new sin altogether, that he never had before*, and beside that, he aggravates all his other sins. Bring me here a Hottentot, or a man from Kam-schatka, a wild savage who has never listened to the Word. That man may have every sin in the catalogue of guilt except one; but that one I am sure he has not. He has not the sin of rejecting the gospel when it is preached to him. But you, when you hear the gospel, have an opportunity for committing a fresh sin; and if you have rejected it, you have added a fresh iniquity to all those others that hang

about your neck. I have often been rebuked by certain men who have erred from the truth, for preaching the doctrine that it is a sin in men, if they reject the gospel of Christ. I care not for every opprobrious title: I am certain that I have the warrant of God's Word in so preaching, and I do not believe that any man can be faithful to men's souls and clear of their blood, unless he bears his frequent and solemn testimony upon this vital subject. "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me." "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sack-cloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you." "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin." "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompence, saith the Lord. And again, the Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." I have been quoting, you see, some scripture passages, and if they do not mean that unbelief is a sin, and *the* sin, which, above all others, damns men's souls, they do not mean anything at all, but they are just a dead letter in the Word of God. Now, adultery and murder, and theft, and lying—all these are damning, and deadly sins; but repentance can cleanse all these, through the blood of Christ. But to reject Christ, destroys a man hopelessly. The murderer, the thief, the drunkard, may yet enter the kingdom of heaven, if, repenting of his sins, he will lay hold on the cross of Christ; but with these sins, a man is inevitably lost, if he believeth not on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, my hearers, will you consider for one moment what an awful sin this is, which you add to all your other sins. Everything lies in the bowels of this sin—the rejecting of Christ. There is murder in this; for if the man on the scaffold rejects a pardon, does he not murder himself? There is pride in this; for you reject Christ, because your proud hearts have turned you aside. There is rebellion in this; for we rebel against God when we reject Christ. There is high treason in this; for you reject a king; you put far from you, him, who is crowned king of the earth, and you incur therefore the weightiest of all guilt. Oh! to think that the Lord Jesus should come from heaven—to think for a moment that he should hang upon the tree—that there he should die in agonies extreme, and that from that cross he should this day look down upon you, and should say, "Come unto me, ye weary and ye heavy laden;" that you should still turn away from him,—it is the unkindest stab of all. What more brutish, what more devilish, than to turn away from him who gave his life for you? Oh that ye were wise, that ye understood this, that ye would consider your latter end!

But again, we do not only add a new sin to the catalogue of guilt, but *we aggravate all the rest*. You cannot sin so cheap as other people, you, who have had the gospel. When the unenlightened and ignorant sin, their conscience does not prick them; and there is not that guilt in the sin of the ignorant, that there is in the sin of the enlightened. Did you steal before? that was bad enough; but hear the gospel and continue a thief, and you are a thief indeed. Did you lie before you heard the gospel? The liar shall have his portion in the lake; but lie after hearing it: and it seems as if the fire of Tophet should be fanned up to a seven-fold fury. He who sins ignorantly, hath some little excuse; but he who sins against light and knowledge, sins presumptuously; and under the law there was no atonement for this, for presumptuous sins were out of the pale of legal atonement, although

blessed be God, Christ hath atoned for even these, and he that believeth shall be saved, despite even his guilt. Oh! I beseech you, recollect that the sin of unbelief blackens every other sin. It is like Jeroboam. It is said of him, he sinned and made Israel to sin. So unbelief sins itself and leads to every other sin. Unbelief is the file by which you sharpen the axe, and the coulter, and the sword, which you use in rebellion against the Most High. Your sins become more exceeding sinful, the more you disbelieve in Christ, the more you know of him, and the longer you reject him. This is God's truth; but a truth that is to be spoken with reluctance, and with many groanings in our spirits. Oh to have such a message to deliver to you, to *you* I say, for if there be a people under heaven to whom my text applies, it is you. If there is one race of men in the world, who have more to account for than others, it is yourselves. There are doubtless others, who are on an equality with you, who sit under a faithful and earnest ministry; but as God shall judge betwixt you and me at the great day, to the utmost of my power I have been faithful to your souls. I have never in this pulpit sought by hard words, by technical language, to magnify my own wisdom. I have spoken to you plainly; and not a word, to the best of my knowledge, has escaped these lips, which every one of you could not understand. You have had a simple gospel. I have not stood here and preached *coldly* to you. I could say as I came up yon stairs, "The burden of the Lord was upon me;" for my heart has come here heavy, and my soul has been hot within me, and when I have preached feebly, my words may have been uncouth, and the language far from proper, but *heart* never has been wanting. This whole soul has spoken to you; and if I could have ransacked heaven and earth to find language that might have won you to the Saviour, I would have done so. I have not shunned to reprove you; I have never minced matters. I have spoken to this age of its iniquities, and to you of your sins. I have not softened down the Bible to suit the carnal tastes of men. I have said *damn*, where God said damn—I have not sweetened it into "condemn." I have not minced matters, nor endeavoured to veil or conceal the truth, but as to every man's conscience in the sight of God, have I endeavoured to commend the gospel, earnestly and with power, and with a plain, outspoken, earnest, and honest ministry. I have not kept back the glorious doctrines of grace, although by preaching them the enemies of the cross have called me an Antinomian; nor have I been afraid to preach man's solemn responsibility, although another tribe have slandered me as an Arminian. And in saying this, I say it not in a way of glorying, but I say it for your rebuke, if you have rejected the gospel, for you shall have sinned far above that of any other men; in casting away Christ, a double measure of the fury of the wrath of God shall fall on you. Sin, then, is aggravated by the rejection of Christ.

III. And now, in the third place, THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST TAKES AWAY ALL EXCUSE FROM THOSE WHO HEAR IT AND REJECT IT. "Now have they no cloke for their sin." A cloak is a very poor covering for sin, when there is an all-seeing eye to look through it. In the great day of the tempest of God's wrath a cloak will be a very poor shelter; but still man is always fond of a cloak. In the day of cold and rain we see men gathering their cloaks about them, and if they have no shelter and no refuge, still they feel a little comforted by their garment. And so it is with you; you will gather together, if you can, an excuse for your sin, and when conscience pricks you, you seek to heal the wound with an excuse. And even in the day of judgment, although a cloak will be a sorry covering, yet it will be better than nothing at all. "But now ye have no cloke for your sin." The traveller is left in the rain without his covering, exposed to the tempest without that garment which once did shelter him. "Now ye have no cloke for your sin,"—discovered, detected, and unmasked, ye are left inexcusable, without a cloak for your iniquity. And now let me just notice how the preaching of the gospel, when it is faithfully performed, takes away all cloaks for sin.

In the first place, one man might get up and say, "I did not know I was doing wrong when I committed such and such an iniquity." Now, *that* you cannot say. God has by his law told you solemnly what is wrong. There stand the ten commandments; and there stands the comment of our Master where he has enlarged upon the commandment, and told us that the old law "Thou shalt not commit adultery," forbade also all sins of the lascivious look and the evil eye. If the Sepoy commits iniquity, there is a cloak for it. I doubt not that his conscience tells him that he does wrong, but his sacred books teach that he is doing right, and therefore he has that cloak. If the Mahomedan commits lust, I

doubt not his conscience doth prick him, but his sacred books give him liberty. But you profess to believe your Bibles, and have them in your houses, and have the preachers of them in all your streets; and therefore when you sin, you sin with the proclamation of the law upon the very wall, before your eyes—you do wilfully violate a well-known law which has come from heaven, and come to you.

Again, you might say, "When I sinned, I did not know how great would be the punishment." Of this also, by the gospel, you are left without excuse; for did not Jesus Christ tell you, and does he not tell you every day, that those who will not have him shall be cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth? Hath he not said, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal?" Does he not himself declare that the wicked shall be burned up with unquenchable fire? Has he not told you of a place where their worm dieth not and where their fire is not quenched? And the ministers of the gospel have not shunned to tell you this too. You have sinned, though you knew you would be lost by it. You have taken the poisonous draught, not thinking that it was harmless: you knew that every drop in the cup was scalding with damnation, and yet you have taken the cup and drained it to its dregs. You have destroyed your own souls with your eyes open; you have gone like a fool to the stocks, like an ox to the slaughter, and like a lamb you have licked the knife of the butcher. In this, then, you are left without excuse.

But some of you may say, "Ah, I heard the gospel, it is true, and I knew that I was doing wrong, but I did not know what I must do to be saved." Is there one among you who can urge such an excuse as this? Methinks you will not have the impudence to do so. "Believe and live," is preached every day in your hearing. Many of you these ten, twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years have been hearing the gospel, and you dare not say, "I did not know what the gospel was." From your earliest childhood many of you have listened to it. The name of Jesus was mingled with the hush of lullaby. You drank in a holy gospel with your mother's milk, and yet despite all that, you have never sought Christ. "Knowledge is power," men say. Alas! Knowledge, when not used, is *wrath*, WRATH, WRATH to the uttermost, against the man who knows, and yet doth that which he knoweth to be wrong.

Methinks I can hear another say, "Well, I heard the gospel preached, but I never had a good example set me." Some of you may say that, and it would be partially true; but there are others of you, concerning whom I may say that this would be a lying excuse. Ah! man; you have been very fond of speaking of the inconsistencies of Christians. You have said, "They do not live as they ought;" and alas, there is too much truth in what you have said. But there was one Christian whom you knew, and whose character you were compelled to admire; do not you remember her? It was the mother who brought you forth. That has always been the one difficulty with you up to this day. You could have rejected the gospel very easily, but your mother's example stood before you, and you could not overcome that. Do you not remember amongst the first early dawns of your recollection, how you opened your little eyes in the morning, and you saw a mother's loving face looking down upon you, and you caught her with a tear in her eye, and you heard her say, "God bless the child, may he call the Redeemer blessed!" You remember how your father did often chide you; *she* did seldom chide, but she often spoke in tones of love. Recollect that little upper room, where she took you aside, and putting her arms round your neck, dedicated you to God, and prayed that the Lord would save you in your childhood. Remember the letter she gave you, and your book in which she wrote your name when you left the parental roof to go abroad, and the sorrow with which she wrote to you when she heard you had begun to plunge in gaiety and mix with the ungodly: recollect that sorrowful look with which she did wring your hand the last time you left her. Remember how she said to you, "You will bring my hairs with sorrow to the grave, if you walk in the ways of iniquity." Well, you knew that what she said was not cant; there was reality in that. You could laugh at the minister, you could say it was *his business*, but at her you could not scoff; she was a Christian, there was no mistake about it. How often did she put up with your angry temper, and bear with your rough manners, for she was a sweet spirit, almost too good for earth—and you recollect that. You were not there when she was dying, you could not arrive in time; but she said to her friend as she was dying, "There is only one thing that I want, then I could die happy—oh, that I

could see my children walking in the truth." Now, I apprehend such an example leaves you without a cloak for your wickedness, and if you commit iniquity after that, how fearful must be the weight of your woe.

But others of you can say that you had no such mother; your first school was the street, and the first example you ever had was that of a swearing father. Recollect, my friend, there is one perfect example—Christ; and that you have read of, though you have not seen him. Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, was a perfect man; in him was there no sin, neither was there guile in his mouth. And if you have never seen anything like Christian worth any where else, yet you can see it in Christ; and in venturing such an excuse as this, remember you have ventured upon a lie, for the example of Christ, the works of Christ, as well as the words of Christ, leave you without excuse for your sin.

Ah, and I think I hear one more excuse offered, and that is this: "Well, I certainly had many advantages, but they were never sent home to my conscience so that I felt them." Now, there are very few of you here who can say that. Some of you will say, "Yes, I heard the minister, but he never made an impression upon me." Ah, young men and young women, and all of you this morning, I must be a witness against you in the day of judgment that this is untrue. For, but now, your consciences were touched; did I not see some soft tears of repentance—I trust they were such—flowing but just now. No, you have not always been unmoved by the gospel; you have grown old now, and it takes a deal to stir you, but it was not always so. There was a time in your youth, when you were very susceptible of impression. Remember, the sins of your youth will cause your bones to rot, if you have still persevered in rejecting the gospel. Your old heart has grown hard, still you are without excuse; you did feel once, ay, and even now you cannot help feeling. I know there are some of you that can scarcely keep your seats at the thought of your iniquities; and you have almost vowed, some of you, that this day you will seek God, and the first thing you will do, will be to climb to your chamber, and shut the door, and seek the Lord. Ah, but I remember a story of one, who remarked to a minister, what a wonderful thing it was to see so many people weeping. "Nay," said he, "I will tell you something more wonderful still, that so many will forget all they wept about when they get outside the door." And you will do this. Still, when you have done it, you will recollect that you have not been without the strivings of God's Spirit. You will remember that God has, this morning, as it were, put a hurdle across your road, digged a ditch in your way, and put up a hand-post, and said, "Take warning! beware, beware, beware! you are rushing madly into the ways of iniquity!" And I have come before you this morning, and in God's name I have said, "Stop, stop, stop, thus saith the Lord, 'consider your ways, why will ye die? Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die O house of Israel?'" And, now, if ye will put this from you, it must be even so; if you will put out these sparks, if ye will quench this first burning torch, it must be so! On your own head be your blood; at your own door lay your iniquities.

IV. But now I have one thing more to do. And it is awful work; for I have as it were to PUT ON THE BLACK CAP AND PRONOUNCE THE SENTENCE OF CONDEMNATION. For those who live and die rejecting Christ there is a most fearful doom. They shall perish with an utter destruction. There are degrees of punishment; but the highest degree is given to the man who rejects Christ. You have noticed that passage, I dare say, that the liar and the whoremonger, and drunkards shall have their portion—whom do you suppose with?—with *unbelievers*; as if hell was made first of all for unbelievers—as if the pit was digged not for whoremongers, and swearers, and drunkards, but for men who despise Christ, because that is the A 1 sin, the cardinal vice, and men are condemned for that. Other iniquities come following after them, but this one goes before them to judgment. Imagine for a moment that time has passed, and that the day of judgment is come. We are all gathered together, both quick and dead. The trumpet-blast waxes exceeding loud and long. We are all attentive, expecting something marvellous. The exchange stands still in its business; the shop is deserted by the tradesman; the crowded streets are filled. All men stand still; they feel that the last great business-day is come, and that now they must settle their accounts for ever. A solemn stillness fills the air: no sound is heard. All, all is noiseless. Presently a great white cloud with solemn state sails through the sky, and then—hark! the twofold clamour of the startled earth. On that cloud there sits one like unto the Son of Man. Every eye looks, and at last there is heard a unanimous shout—

"It is he! It is he!" and after that you hear on the one hand, shouts of "Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Welcome, Welcome, Welcome Son of God." But mixed with that there is a deep bass, composed of the weeping and the wailing of the men who have persecuted him, and who have rejected him. Listen! I think I can dissect the sonnet; I think I can hear the words as they come separately, each one of them, tolling like a death knell. What say they? They say, "Rocks hide us, mountains fall upon us, hide us from the face of Him that sits upon the throne." And shall you be among the number of those who say to the rocks "Hide us?"

My impenitent hearer, I suppose for a moment that you have gone out of this world, and that you have died impenitent, and that you are among those who are weeping, and wailing, and gnashing their teeth. Oh! what will then be your terror! Blanched cheeks, and knocking knees are nothing, compared to thy horror of heart, when thou shalt be drunken, but not with wine, and when thou shalt reel to and fro, with the intoxication of amazement, and shall fall down, and roll in the dust for horror and dismay. For there he comes, and there he is, with fierce, fire-darting eye; and now the time is come for the great division. The voice is heard, "Gather my people from the four winds of heaven, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth." They are gathered at the right hand, and there they are. And now saith he, "Gather up the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn." And you are gathered, and on the left hand there you are, gathered into the bundle. All that is wanted is the lighting of the pile. Where shall be the torch that shall kindle them? The tares are to be burned: where is the flame? The flame comes out of his mouth, and it is composed of words like these—"Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels." Do you linger? "*Depart!*" Do you seek a blessing? "*Ye are cursed.*" I curse you with a curse. Do ye seek to escape? *It is everlasting fire.* Do ye stop and plead? No, "*I culled, and ye refused; I stretched out my hands, and ye regarded me not; therefore I will mock at your calamity, I will laugh when your fear cometh.*" "*Depart, again, I say; depart for ever!*" And you are gone. And what is your reflection? Why, it is this: "Oh! would to God that I never had been born! Oh! that I had never heard the gospel preached, that I might never have had the sin of rejecting it!" This will be the gnawing of the worm in your conscience—"I knew better, but I did not do better."—As I sowed the wind, it is right I should reap the whirlwind; I was checked, but I would not be stopped; I was wooed, but I would not be invited. Now I see that I have murdered myself. Oh! thought above all thoughts most deadly. I am lost, lost, lost! And this is the horror of horrors: I have caused myself to be lost; I have put from me the gospel of Christ; I have destroyed myself.

Shall this be so with thee, my hearer? Shall this be so with thee? I pray it may not! O may the Holy Spirit now constrain thee to come to Jesus, for I know that thou art too vile to yield, unless he compels thee. But I hope for thee. Methinks I hear thee say, "What must I do to be saved?" Let me tell you the way of salvation, and then farewell. If thou wouldest be saved, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" for the Scripture says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." There he hangs, dying on his cross! look to him and live.

"Venture on him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude;
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."

Be you wicked, filthy, depraved, degraded, you are still invited to Christ. The devil's castaways Christ takes in—the offscouring, the dross, the scum, the druff, the sewerage of this world, is now invited to Christ. Come to him now, and obtain mercy. But if ye harden your hearts,

"The Lord in anger dress'd,
Shall lift his hand and swear,
'You that despis'd my promis'd rest,
Shall have no portion there.'"

The New Park Street Pulpit.

HUMAN INABILITY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 7TH, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him."—John vi. 44.

"COMING to Christ" is a very common phrase in Holy Scripture. It is used to express those acts of the soul wherein, leaving at once our self-righteousness, and our sins, we fly unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive his righteousness to be our covering, and his blood to be our atonement. Coming to Christ, then, embraces in it repentance, self-negation, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it sums within itself all those things which are the necessary attendants of these great states of heart, such as the belief of the truth, earnestness of prayer to God, the submission of the soul to the precepts of God's gospel, and all those things which accompany the dawn of salvation in the soul. Coming to Christ is just the one essential thing for a sinner's salvation. He that cometh not to Christ, do what he may, or think what he may, is yet in "the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." Coming to Christ is the very first effect of regeneration. No sooner is the soul quickened than it at once discovers its lost estate, is horrified thereat, looks out for a refuge, and believing Christ to be a suitable one, flies to him and reposes in him. Where there is not this coming to Christ, it is certain that there is as yet no quickening: where there is no quickening, the soul is dead in trespasses and sins, and being dead it cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. We have before us now an announcement very startling, some say very obnoxious. Coming to Christ, though described by some people as being the very easiest thing in all the world, is in our text declared to be a thing utterly and entirely impossible to any man, unless the Father shall draw him to Christ. It shall be our business, then, to enlarge upon this declaration. We doubt not that it will always be offensive to carnal nature, but, nevertheless, the offending of human nature is sometimes the first step towards bringing it to bow itself before God. And if this be the effect of a painful process, we can forget the pain and rejoice in the glorious consequences.

I shall endeavour this morning, first of all, to notice *man's inability*, wherein it consists. Secondly, *the Father's drawings*—what these are, and how they are exerted upon the soul. And then I shall conclude by noticing a *sweet consolation* which may be derived from this seemingly barren and terrible text.

I. First, then, MAN'S INABILITY. The text says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Wherein does this inability lie?

First, it does not lie in any *physical* defect. If in coming to Christ, moving the body or walking with the feet should be of any assistance, certainly man has all physical power to come to Christ in that sense. I remember to have heard a very foolish Antinomian declare, that he did not believe any man had the power to walk to the house of God unless the Father drew him. Now the man was plainly foolish, because he must have seen that as long as a man was alive and had legs, it was as easy for him to walk to the house of God as to the house of Satan. If coming to Christ includes the utterance of a prayer, man has no physical defect in that respect, if he be not dumb, he can say a prayer as easily as he can utter blasphemy. It is as easy for a man to sing one of the songs of Zion as to sing a profane and libidinous

song. There is no lack of physical power in coming to Christ. All that can be wanted with regard to the bodily strength man most assuredly has, and any part of salvation which consists in that is totally and entirely in the power of man without any assistance from the Spirit of God. Nor, again, does this inability lie in any *mental* lack. I can believe this Bible to be true just as easily as I can believe any other book to be true. So far as believing on Christ is an act of the mind, I am just as able to believe on Christ as I am able to believe on anybody else. Let his statement be but true, it is idle to tell me I cannot believe it. I can believe the statement that Christ makes as well as I can believe the statement of any other person. There is no deficiency of faculty in the mind: it is as capable of appreciating as a mere mental act the guilt of sin, as it is of appreciating the guilt of assassination. It is just as possible for me to exercise the mental idea of seeking God, as it is to exercise the thought of ambition. I have all the mental strength and power that can possibly be needed, so far as mental power is needed in salvation at all. Nay, there is not any man so ignorant that he can plead a lack of intellect as an excuse for rejecting the gospel. The defect, then, does not lie either in the body, or, what we are bound to call, speaking theologically, the mind. It is not any lack or deficiency there, although it is the vitiation of the mind, the corruption or the ruin of it, which, after all, is the very essence of man's inability.

Permit me to show you wherein this inability of man really does lie. It lies deep in *his nature*. Through the fall, and through our own sin, the nature of man has become so debased, and depraved, and corrupt, that it is impossible for him to come to Christ without the assistance of God the Holy Spirit. Now, in trying to exhibit how the nature of man thus renders him unable to come to Christ, you must allow me just to take this figure. You see a sheep; how willingly it feeds upon the herbage! You never knew a sheep sigh after carrion; it could not live on lion's food. Now bring me a wolf; and you ask me whether a wolf cannot eat grass, whether it cannot be just as docile and as domesticated as the sheep. I answer, no; because its nature is contrary thereunto. You say, "Well, it has ears and legs; can it not hear the shepherd's voice, and follow him whithersoever he leadeth it?" I answer, certainly; there is no physical cause why it cannot do so, but its nature forbids, and therefore I say it *cannot* do so. Can it not be tamed? cannot its ferocity be removed? Probably it may so far be subdued that it may become apparently tame; but there will always be a marked distinction between it and the sheep, because there is a distinction in nature. Now, the reason why man cannot come to Christ, is not because he cannot come, so far as his body or his mere power of mind is concerned, but because his nature is so corrupt that he has neither the will nor the power to come to Christ unless drawn by the Spirit. But let me give you a better illustration. You see a mother with her babe in her arms. You put a knife into her hand, and tell her to stab that babe to the heart. She replies, and very truthfully, "I cannot." Now, so far as her bodily power is concerned, she can, if she pleases; there is the knife, and there is the child. The child cannot resist, and she has quite sufficient strength in her hand immediately to stab it to its heart. But she is quite correct when she says she cannot do it. As a mere act of the mind, it is quite possible she might think of such a thing as killing the child, and yet she says she cannot think of such a thing; and she does not say falsely, for her nature as a mother forbids her doing a thing from which her soul revolts. Simply because she is that child's parent she feels she cannot kill it. It is even so with a sinner. Coming to Christ is so obnoxious to human nature that, although, so far as physical and mental forces are concerned, (and these have but a very narrow sphere in salvation) men could come if they would: it is strictly correct to say that they cannot and will not unless the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them. Let us enter a little more deeply into the subject, and try to show you wherein this inability of man consists, in its more minute particulars.

1. First, it lies in the *obstinacy of the human will*. "Oh!" saith the Arminian, "men may be saved if they will." We reply, "My dear sir, we all believe that; but it is just the *if they will* that is the difficulty. We assert that no man will come to Christ unless he be drawn; nay, we do not assert it, but *Christ* himself declares it—'*Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;*' and as long as that '*ye will not come*' stands on record in Holy Scripture, we shall not be brought to believe in any doctrine of the freedom of the human will." It is strange how people, when talking about free-will, talk of things which they do not at all under-

stand. "Now," says one, "I believe men can be saved if they will." My dear sir, that is not the question at all. The question is, are men ever found naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the gospel of Christ? We declare, upon Scriptural authority, that the human will is so desperately set on mischief, so depraved, and so inclined to everything that is evil, and so disinclined to everything that is good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human will will ever be constrained towards Christ. You reply, that men sometimes are willing, without the help of the Holy Spirit. I answer—Did you ever meet with any person who was? Scores and hundreds, nay, thousands of Christians have I conversed with, of different opinions, young and old, but it has never been my lot to meet with one who could affirm that he came to Christ of himself, without being drawn. The universal confession of all true believers is this—"I know that unless Jesus Christ had sought me when a stranger wandering from the fold of God, I would to this very hour have been wandering far from him, at a distance from him, and loving that distance well." With common consent, all believers affirm the truth, that men will not come to Christ till the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them.

2. Again, not only is the will obstinate, but the *understanding is darkened*. Of that we have abundant Scriptural proof. I am not now making mere assertions, but stating doctrines authoritatively taught in the Holy Scriptures, and known in the conscience of every Christian man—that the understanding of man is so dark, that he cannot by any means understand the things of God until his understanding has been opened. Man is by nature blind within. The cross of Christ, so laden with glories, and glittering with attractions, never attracts him, because he is blind and cannot see its beauties. Talk to him of the wonders of the creation, show to him the many-coloured arch that spans the sky, let him behold the glories of a landscape, he is well able to see all these things; but talk to him of the wonders of the covenant of grace, speak to him of the security of the believer in Christ, tell him of the beauties of the person of the Redeemer, he is quite deaf to all your description; you are as one that playeth a goodly tune, it is true; but he regards not, he is deaf, he has no comprehension. Or, to return to the verse which we so specially marked in our reading, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned;" and inasmuch as he is a natural man, it is not in his power to discern the things of God. "Well," says one, "I think I have arrived at a very tolerable judgment in matters of theology; I think I understand almost every point." True, that you may do in the letter of it; but in the spirit of it, in the true reception thereof into the soul, and in the actual understanding of it, it is impossible for you to have attained, unless you have been drawn by the Spirit. For as long as that Scripture stands true, that carnal men cannot receive spiritual things, it must be true that you have not received them, unless you have been renewed and made a spiritual man in Christ Jesus. The will, then, and the understanding, are two great doors, both blocked up against our coming to Christ, and until these are opened by the sweet influences of the Divine Spirit, they must be for ever closed to anything like coming to Christ.

3. Again, *the affections*, which constitute a very great part of man, are depraved. Man, as he is, before he receives the grace of God, loves anything and everything above spiritual things. If ye want proof of this, look around you. There needs no monument to the depravity of the human affections. Cast your eyes everywhere—there is not a street, nor a house, nay, nor a heart, which doth not bear upon it sad evidence of this dreadful truth. Why is it that men are not found on the Sabbath Day universally flocking to the house of God? Why are we not more constantly found reading our Bibles? How is it that prayer is a duty almost universally neglected? Why is it that Christ Jesus is so little beloved? Why are even his professed followers so cold in their affections to him? Whence arise these things? Assuredly, dear brethren, we can trace them to no other source than this, the corruption and vitiation of the affections. We love that which we ought to hate, and we hate that which we ought to love. It is but human nature, fallen human nature, that man should love this present life better than the life to come. It is but the effect of the fall, that man should love sin better than righteousness, and the ways of this world better than the ways of God. And again, we repeat it, until these affections be renewed, and turned into a fresh channel by the gracious drawings of the Father, it is not possible for any man to love the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Yet once more—*conscience*, too, has been overpowered by the fall. I believe there is no more egregious mistake made by divines, than when they tell people that conscience is the vicegerent of God within the soul, and that it is one of those powers which retains its ancient dignity, and stands erect amidst the fall of its compcers. My brethren, when man fell in the garden, manhood fell entirely; there was not one single pillar in the temple of manhood that stood erect. It is true, conscience was not destroyed. The pillar was not shattered; it fell, and it fell in one piece, and there it lies along, the mightiest remnant of God's once perfect work in man. But that conscience is fallen, I am sure. Look at men. Who among them is the possessor of a "good conscience toward God," but the regenerated man? Do you imagine that if men's consciences always spoke loudly and clearly to them, they would live in the daily commission of acts, which are as opposed to the right as darkness to light? No, beloved; conscience can tell me that I am a sinner, but conscience cannot make me *feel* that I am one. Conscience may tell me that such-and-such a thing is wrong, but how wrong it is conscience itself does not know. Did any man's conscience, unenlightened by the Spirit, ever tell him that his sins deserved damnation? Or if conscience did do that, did it ever lead any man to feel an abhorrence of sin as sin? In fact, did conscience ever bring a man to such a self-renunciation, that he did totally abhor himself and all his works and come to Christ? No, conscience, although it is not dead, is ruined, its power is impaired, it hath not that clearness of eye and that strength of hand, and that thunder of voice, which it had before the fall; but hath ceased to a great degree, to exert its supremacy in the town of Mansoul. Then, beloved, it becomes necessary for this very reason, because conscience is depraved, that the Holy Spirit should step in, to show us our need of a Saviour, and draw us to the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Still," says one, "as far as you have hitherto gone, it appears to me that you consider that the reason why men do not come to Christ is that they will not, rather than they cannot." True, most true. I believe the greatest reason of man's inability is the obstinacy of his will. That once overcome, I think the great stone is rolled away from the sepulchre, and the hardest part of the battle is already won. But allow me to go a little further. My text does not say, "No man will come," but it says, "No man can come." Now, many interpreters believe that the *can* here, is but a strong expression conveying no more meaning than the word *will*. I feel assured that this is not correct. There is in man, not only unwillingness to be saved, but there is a spiritual powerlessness to come to Christ; and this I will prove to every Christian at any rate. Beloved, I speak to you who have already been quickened by the divine grace, does not your experience teach you that there are times when you have a will to serve God, and yet have not the power? Have you not sometimes been obliged to say that you have wished to believe, but you have had to pray, "Lord, help mine unbelief?" Because, although willing enough to receive God's testimony, your own carnal nature was too strong for you, and you felt you needed supernatural help. Are you able to go into your room at any hour you choose, and to fall upon your knees and say, "Now, it is my will that I should be very earnest in prayer, and that I should draw near unto God?" I ask, do you find your power equal to your will? You could say, even at the bar of God himself, that you are sure you are not mistaken in your willingness; you are willing to be wrapt up in devotion, it is your will that your soul should not wander from a pure contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ, but you find that you cannot do that, even when you are willing, without the help of the Spirit. Now, if the quickened child of God finds a spiritual inability, how much more the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sin? If even the advanced Christian, after thirty or forty years, finds himself sometimes willing and yet powerless—if such be his experience,—does it not seem more than likely that the poor sinner who has not yet believed, should find a need of strength as well as a want of will?

But, again, there is another argument. If the sinner has strength to come to Christ, I should like to know how we are to understand those continual descriptions of the sinner's state which we meet with in God's holy Word? Now, a sinner is said to be dead in trespasses and sins. Will you affirm that death implies nothing more than the absence of a will? Surely a corpse is quite as unable as unwilling. Or again, do not all men see that there is a distinction between *will* and *power*: might not that corpse be sufficiently quickened to get a will, and yet be so powerless that it could not lift as much as its hand or foot? Have we never seen cases

In which persons have been just sufficiently re-animated to give evidence of life, and have yet been so near death that they could not have performed the slightest action? Is there not a clear difference between the giving of the will and the giving of power? It is quite certain, however, that where the will is given, the power will follow. Make a man willing, and he shall be made powerful; for when God gives the will, he does not tantalize man by giving him to wish for that which he is unable to do; nevertheless he makes such a division between the will and the power, that it shall be seen that both things are quite distinct gifts of the Lord God.

Then I must ask one more question: if all that were needed to make a man willing, do you not at once degrade the Holy Spirit? Are we not in the habit of giving all the glory of salvation wrought in us to God the Spirit? But now, if all that God the Spirit does for me is to make me willing to do these things for myself, am I not in a great measure a sharer with the Holy Spirit in the glory? and may I not boldly stand up and say, "It is true the Spirit gave me the will to do it, but still I did it myself, and therein will I glory; for if I did these things myself without assistance from on high, I will not cast my crown at his feet; it is my own crown, I earned it, and I will keep it." Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is evermore in Scripture set forth as the person who worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure, we hold it to be a legitimate inference that he must do something more for us than the mere making of us willing, and that therefore there must be another thing besides want of will in a sinner—there must be absolute and actual want of power.

Now, before I leave this statement, let me address myself to you for a moment. I am often charged with preaching doctrines that may do a great deal of hurt. Well, I shall not deny the charge, for I am not careful to answer in this matter. I have my witnesses here present to prove that the things which I have preached have done a great deal of hurt, but they have not done hurt either to morality or to God's Church; the hurt has been on the side of Satan. There are not ones or twos but many hundreds who this morning rejoice that they have been brought near to God; from having been profane Sabbath-breakers, drunkards, or worldly persons, they have been brought to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ; and if this be any hurt may God of his infinite mercy send us a thousand times as much. But further, what truth is there in the world which will not hurt a man who chooses to make hurt of it? You who preach general redemption, are very fond of proclaiming the great truth of God's mercy to the last moment. But how dare you preach that? Many people make hurt of it by putting off the day of grace, and thinking that the last hour may do as well as the first. Why, if we never preached anything which man could misuse, and abuse, we must hold our tongues for ever. Still says one, "Well then, if I cannot save myself, and cannot come to Christ, I must sit still and do nothing." If men do say so, on their own heads shall be their doom. We have very plainly told you that there are many things you can do. To be found continually in the house of God is in your power; to study the Word of God with diligence is in your power; to renounce your outward sin, to forsake the vices in which you indulge, to make your life honest, sober, and righteous, is in your power. For this you need no help from the Holy Spirit; all this you can do yourself; but to come to Christ truly is not in your power, until you are renewed by the Holy Ghost. But mark you, your want of power is no excuse, seeing that you have no desire to come, and are living in wilful rebellion against God. Your want of power lies mainly in the obstinacy of nature. Suppose a liar says that it is not in his power to speak the truth, that he has been a liar so long, that he cannot leave it off; is that an excuse for him? Suppose a man who has long indulged in lust should tell you that he finds his lusts have so girt about him like a great iron net that he cannot get rid of them, would you take that as an excuse? Truly it is none at all. If a drunkard has become so foully a drunkard, that he finds it impossible to pass a public-house without stepping in, do you therefore excuse him? No, because his inability to reform, lies in his nature, which he has no desire to restrain or conquer. The thing that is done, and the thing that causes the thing that is done, being both from the root of sin, are two evils which cannot excuse each other. What though the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots? It is because you have learned to do evil that you cannot now learn to do well; and instead, therefore, of letting you sit down to excuse yourselves, let me put a thunderbolt beneath the seat of your sloth, that you may be startled by it and aroused. Remember, that to sit still is to be damned to all

eternity Oh! that God the Holy Spirit might make use of this truth in a very different manner! Before I have done I trust I shall be enabled to show you how it is that this truth, which apparently condemns men and shuts them out, is, after all, the great truth, which has been blessed to the conversion of men.

II. Our second point is THE FATHER'S DRAWINGS. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." How then does the Father draw men? Arminian divines generally say that God draws men by the preaching of the gospel. Very true; the preaching of the gospel is the instrument of drawing men, but there must be some thing more than this. Let me ask to whom did Christ address these words? Why, to the people of Capernaum, where he had often preached, where he had uttered mournfully and plaintively the woes of the law and the invitations of the gospel. In that city he had done many mighty works and worked many miracles. In fact, such teaching and such miraculous attestation had he given to them, that he declared that Tyre and Sidon would have repented long ago in sack-cloth and ashes, if they had been blessed with such privileges. Now, if the preaching of Christ himself did not avail to the enabling these men to come to Christ, it cannot be possible that all that was intended by the drawing of the Father was simply preaching. No, brethren, you must note again, he does not say no man can come except the *minister* draw him, but except the *Father* draw him. Now there is such a thing as being drawn by the gospel, and drawn by the minister, without being drawn by God. Clearly, it is a divine drawing that is meant, a drawing by the Most High God—the First Person of the most glorious Trinity sending out the Third Person, the Holy Spirit, to induce men to come to Christ. Another person turns round and says with a sneer, "Then do you think that Christ drags men to himself, seeing that they are unwilling?" I remember meeting once with a man who said to me, "Sir, you preach that Christ takes people by the hair of their heads and drags them to himself." I asked him whether he could refer to the date of the sermon wherein I preached that extraordinary doctrine, for if he could, I should be very much obliged. However, he could not. But said I, while Christ does not drag people to himself by the hair of their heads, I believe that he draws them by the heart quite as powerfully as your caricature would suggest. Mark that in the Father's drawing there is no compulsion whatever; Christ never compelled any man to come to him against his will. If a man be unwilling to be saved, Christ does not save him against his will. How, then, does the Holy Spirit draw him? Why, by making him willing. It is true he does not use "moral suasion;" he knows a nearer method of reaching the heart. He goes to the secret fountain of the heart, and he knows how, by some mysterious operation, to turn the will in an opposite direction, so that, as Ralph Erskine paradoxically puts it, the man is saved "with full consent against his will;" that is, against his old will he is saved. But he is saved with full consent, for he is made willing in the day of God's power. Do not imagine that any man will go to heaven kicking and struggling all the way against the hand that draws him. Do not conceive that any man will be plunged in the bath of a Saviour's blood while he is striving to run away from the Saviour. Oh, no. It is quite true that first of all man is unwilling to be saved. When the Holy Spirit hath put his influence into the heart, the text is fulfilled—"draw me and I will run after thee." We follow on while he draws us, glad to obey the voice which once we had despised. But the gist of the matter lies in the turning of the will. How that is done no flesh knoweth; it is one of those mysteries that is clearly perceived as a fact, but the cause of which no tongue can tell, and no heart can guess. The apparent way, however, in which the Holy Spirit operates, we can tell you. The first thing the Holy Spirit does when he comes into a man's heart is this: he finds him with a very good opinion of himself: and there is nothing which prevents a man coming to Christ like a good opinion of himself. Why, says man, "I don't want to come to Christ. I have as good a righteousness as anybody can desire. I feel I can walk into heaven on my own rights." The Holy Spirit lays bare his heart, lets him see the loathsome cancer that is there eating away his life, uncovers to him all the blackness and defilement of that sink of hell, the human heart, and then the man stands aghast. "I never thought I was like this. Oh! those sins I thought were little, have swelled out to an immense stature. What I thought was a mole-hill has grown into a mountain; it was but the hyssop on the wall before, but now it has become a cedar of Lebanon. Oh," saith the man within himself, "I will try and reform; I will do good deeds enough to wash these black deeds out." Then

comes the Holy Spirit and shows him that he cannot do this, takes away all his fancied power and strength, so that the man falls down on his knees in agony, and cries, "Oh! once I thought I could save myself by my good works, but now I find that

‘Could my tears for ever flow,
Could my zeal no respite know,
All for sin could not atone,
Thou must save and thou alone.’”

Then the heart sinks, and the man is ready to despair. And saith he, "I never can be saved. Nothing can save me." Then, comes the Holy Spirit and shows the sinner the cross of Christ, gives him eyes anointed with heavenly eye-salve, and says, "Look to yonder cross, that Man died to save sinners; you feel that you are a sinner; he died to save you." And he enables the heart to believe, and to come to Christ. And when it comes to Christ, by this sweet drawing of the Spirit, it finds "a peace with God which passeth all understanding, which keeps his heart and mind through Jesus Christ our Lord." Now, you will plainly perceive that all this may be done without any compulsion. Man is as much drawn willingly, as if he were not drawn at all; and he comes to Christ with full consent, with as full a consent as if no secret influence had ever been exercised in his heart. But that influence must be exercised, or else there never has been and there never will be, any man who either can or will come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. And, now, we gather up our ends, and conclude by trying to make a practical application of the doctrine; and we trust a comfortable one. "Well," says one, "if what this man preaches be true, what is to become of my religion? for do you know I have been a long while trying, and I do not like to hear you say a man cannot save himself. I believe he can, and I mean to persevere; but if I am to believe what you say, I must give it all up and begin again." My dear friends, it will be a very happy thing if you do. Do not think that I shall be at all alarmed if you do so. Remember, what you are doing is building your house upon the sand, and it is but an act of charity if I can shake it a little for you. Let me assure you, in God's name, if your religion has no better foundation than your own strength, it will not stand you at the bar of God. Nothing will last to eternity, but that which came from eternity. Unless the everlasting God has done a good work in your heart, all you may have done must be unravelled at the last day of account. It is all in vain for you to be a church-goer or chapel-goer, a good keeper of the Sabbath, an observer of your prayers: it is all in vain for you to be honest to your neighbours and reputable in your conversation; if you hope to be saved by these things, it is all in vain for you to trust in them. Go on; be as honest as you like, keep the Sabbath perpetually, be as holy as you can. I would not dissuade you from these things. God forbid; grow in them, but oh, do not trust in them, for if you rely upon these things you will find they will fail you when most you need them. And if there be anything else that you have found yourself able to do unassisted by divine grace, the sooner you can get rid of the hope that has been engendered by it the better for you, for it is a foul delusion to rely upon anything that flesh can do. A spiritual heaven must be inhabited by spiritual men, and preparation for it must be wrought by the Spirit of God. "Well," cries another, "I have been sitting under a ministry where I have been told that I could, at my own option, repent and believe, and the consequence is that I have been putting it off from day to day. I thought I could come one day as well as another; that I had only to say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me,' and believe, and then I should be saved. Now you have taken all this hope away for me, sir; I feel amazement and horror taking hold upon me." Again, I say, "My dear friend, I am very glad of it. This was the effect which I hoped to produce. I pray that you may feel this a great deal more. When you have no hope of saving yourself, I shall have hope that God has begun to save you. As soon as you say 'Oh, I cannot come to Christ. Lord, draw me, help me,' I shall rejoice over you. He who has got a will, though he has not power, has grace begun in his heart, and God will not leave him until the work is finished." But, careless sinner, learn that thy salvation now hangs in God's hand. Oh, remember thou art entirely in the hand of God. Thou hast sinned against him, and if he wills to damn thee, damned thou art. Thou canst not resist his will nor thwart his purpose. Thou hast deserved his wrath, and if he chooses to pour the full shower of that wrath upon thy head,

thou canst do nothing to avert it. If, on the other hand, he chooses to save thee, he is able to save thee to the very uttermost. But thou liest as much in his hand as the summer's moth beneath thine own finger. He is the God whom thou art grieving every day. Doth it not make thee tremble to think that thy eternal destiny now hangs upon the will of him whom thou hast angered and incensed? Dost not this make thy knees knock together, and thy blood curdle? If it does so I rejoice, inasmuch as this may be the first effect of the Spirit's drawing in thy soul. Oh, tremble to think that the God whom thou hast angered, is the God upon whom thy salvation or thy condemnation entirely depends. Tremble and "kiss the Son lest he be angry and ye perish from the way while his wrath is kindled but a little."

Now, the comfortable reflection is this:—Some of you this morning are conscious that you are coming to Christ. Have you not begun to weep the penitential tear? Did not your closet witness your prayerful preparation for the hearing of the Word of God? And during the service of this morning, has not your heart said within you, "Lord, save me, or I perish, for save myself I cannot?" And could you not now stand up in your seat, and sing,

"Oh, sovereign grace my heart subdue;
I would be led in triumph, too,
A willing captive of my Lord,
To sing the triumph of his Word"?

And have I not myself heard you say in your heart—"Jesus, Jesus, my whole trust is in thee: I know that no righteousness of my own can save me, but only thou, O Christ—sink or swim, I cast myself on thee?" Oh, my brother, thou art drawn by the Father, for thou couldst not have come unless he had drawn thee. Sweet thought! And if he has drawn thee, dost thou know what is the delightful inference? Let me repeat one text, and may that comfort thee: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Yes, my poor weeping brother, inasmuch as thou art now coming to Christ, God has drawn thee; and inasmuch as he has drawn thee, it is a proof that he has loved thee from before the foundation of the world. Let thy heart leap within thee, thou art one of his. Thy name was written on the Saviour's hands when they were nailed to the accursed tree. Thy name glitters on the breast-plate of the great High Priest to-day; ay, and it was there before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round. Rejoice in the Lord ye that have come to Christ, and shout for joy all ye that have been drawn of the Father. For this is your proof, your solemn testimony, that you from among men have been chosen in eternal election, and that you shall be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto the salvation which is ready to be revealed.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

SOVEREIGN GRACE AND MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 1, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, all day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."—Rom. x. 20—21.

DOUBTLESS these words primarily refer to the casting away of the Jews, and to the choosing of the Gentiles. The Gentiles were a people who sought not after God, but lived in idolatry; nevertheless, Jehovah was pleased in these latter times to send the gospel of his grace to them: while the Jews who had long enjoyed the privileges of the Word of God, on account of their disobedience and rebellion were cast away. I believe, however, that while this is the primary object of the words of our text, yet, as Calvin says, the truth taught in the text is a type of a universal fact. As God did choose the people who knew him not, so hath he chosen, in the abundance of his grace, to manifest his salvation to men who are out of the way; while, on the other hand, the men who are lost, after having heard the Word, are lost because of their wilful sin; for God doth all the day long "stretch forth his hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."

The system of truth is not one straight line, but two. No man will ever get a right view of the gospel until he knows how to look at the two lines at once. I am taught in one book to believe that what I sow I shall reap: I am taught in another place, that "it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." I see in one place, God presiding over all in providence; and yet I see, and I cannot help seeing, that man acts as he pleases, and that God has left his actions to his own will, in a great measure. Now, if I were to declare that man was so free to act, that there was no presidency of God over his actions, I should be driven very near to Atheism; and if, on the other hand, I declare that God so overrules all things, as that man is not free enough to be responsible, I am driven at once into Antinomianism or fatalism. That God predestines, and that man is responsible, are two things that few can see. They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory; but they are not. It is just the fault of our weak judgment. Two truths cannot be contradictory to each other. If, then, I find taught in one place that everything is fore-ordained, *that is true*; and if I find in another place that man is responsible for all his actions, *that is true*; and it is my folly that leads me to imagine that two truths can ever contradict each other. These two truths, I do not believe, can ever be welded into one upon any human anvil, but one they shall be in eternity: they are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the mind that shall pursue them farthest, will never discover that they converge; but they do converge, and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring.

Now, this morning I am about to consider the two doctrines. In the 20th verse, we have taught us *the doctrines of sovereign grace*—"But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me." In the next verse, we have *the doctrine of man's guilt in*

rejecting God. "To Israel he saith, all day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."

I. First, then, DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY AS EXEMPLIFIED IN SALVATION. If any man be saved, he is saved by Divine grace, and by Divine grace alone; and the reason of his salvation is not to be found in him, but in God. We are not saved as the result of anything that we do or that we will; but we will and do as the result of God's good pleasure, and the work of his grace in our hearts. No sinner can prevent God; that is, he cannot go before him, cannot anticipate him; God is always first in the matter of salvation. He is before our convictions, before our desires, before our fears, before our hopes. All that is good or ever will be good in us, is preceded by the grace of God, and is the effect of a Divine cause within.

Now in speaking of God's gracious acts of salvation, this morning, I notice first, that they are entirely *unmerited*. You will see that the people here mentioned certainly did not merit God's grace. They found him, but they never sought for him; he was made manifest to them, but they never asked for him. There never was a man saved yet who merited it. Ask all the saints of God, and they will tell you that their former life was spent in the lusts of the flesh; that in the days of their ignorance, they revolted against God and turned back from his ways, that when they were invited to come to him they despised the invitation, and, when warned, cast the warning behind their back. They will tell you that their being drawn by God, was not the result of any merit before conversion; for some of them, so far from having any merit, were the very vilest of the vile: they plunged into the very kennel of sin; they were not ashamed of all the things of which it would be a shame for us to speak; they were ringleaders in crime, very princes in the ranks of the enemy; and yet sovereign grace came to them, and they were brought to know the Lord. They will tell you that it was not the result of anything good in their disposition, for although they trust that there is now something excellent implanted in them, yet in the days of their flesh they could see no one quality which was not perverted to the service of Satan. Ask them whether they think they were chosen of God because of their courage; they will tell you, no; if they had courage it was defaced, for they were courageous to do evil. Question them whether they were chosen of God because of their talent; they will tell you, no; they had that talent, but they prostituted it to the service of Satan. Question them whether they were chosen because of the openness and generosity of their disposition; they will tell you that that very openness of temper, and that very generosity of disposition, led them to plunge deeper into the depths of sin, than they otherwise would have done, for they were "hail fellow, well met," with every evil man, and ready to drink and join every jovial party which should come in their way. There was in them no reason whatever why God should have mercy upon them, and the wonder to them is that he did not cut them down in the midst of their sins, blot out their names from the book of life, and sweep them into the gulf where the fire burneth that shall devour the wicked. But some have said that God chooses his people because he foresees that after he chooses them, they will do this, that, and the other, which shall be meritorious and excellent. Refer again to the people of God, and they will tell you that since their conversion they have had much to weep over. Although they can rejoice that God has begun the good work in them, they often tremble lest it should not be God's work at all. They will tell you that if they are abundant in faith yet there are times when they are superabundant in unbelief; that if sometimes they are full of works of holiness, yet there are times when they weep many tears to think that those very acts of holiness were stained with sin. The Christian will tell you that he weeps over his very tears; he feels that there is filth even in the best of desires; that he has to pray to God to forgive his prayers, for there is sin in the midst of his supplications, and that he has to sprinkle even his best offerings with the atoning blood, for he never else can bring an offering without spot or blemish. You shall appeal to the brightest saint, to the man whose presence in the midst of society is like the presence of an angel, and he will tell you that he is still ashamed of himself. "Ah!" he will say, "you may praise me, but I cannot praise myself; you speak well of me, you applaud me, but if you knew my heart you would see abundant reason to think of me as a poor sinner saved by grace, who hath nothing whereof to glory, and must bow his head and confess his iniquities in the sight of God." Grace, then, is entirely unmerited.

Again, the grace of God is *sovereign*. By that word we mean that God has an absolute right to give that grace where he chooses, and to withhold it when he pleases. He is not bound to give it to any man, much less to all men; and if he chooses to give it to one man and not to another, his answer is, "Is thine eye evil because mine eye is good? Can I not do as I will with mine own? I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Now, I want you to notice the sovereignty of Divine grace as illustrated in the text: "I was found of them that sought me not, I was made manifest to them that asked not after me." You would imagine that if God gave his grace to any he would wait until he found them earnestly seeking him. You would imagine that God in the highest heavens would say, "I have mercies, but I will leave men alone, and when they feel their need of these mercies and seek me diligently with their whole heart, day and night, with tears, and vows, and supplications, then will I bless them, but not before." But, beloved, God saith no such thing. It is true he doth bless them that cry unto him, but he blesses them before they cry, for their cries are not their own cries, but cries which he has put into their lips; their desires are not of their own growth, but desires which he has cast like good seed into the soil of their hearts. God saves the men that do not seek him. Oh, wonder of wonders! It is mercy indeed when God saves a seeker; but how much greater mercy when he seeks the lost himself! Mark the parable of Jesus Christ concerning the lost sheep; it does not run thus: "A certain man had a hundred sheep, and one of them did go astray. And he tarried at home, and lo, the sheep came back, and he received it joyfully and said to his friends, rejoice, for the sheep that I have lost is come back." No; he *went after* the sheep: it never would have come after him; it would have wandered farther and farther away. He went after it; over hills of difficulty, down valleys of despondency he pursued his wandering feet, and at last he laid hold of it; he did not drive it before him, he did not lead it, but he carried it himself all the way, and when he brought it home he did not say, "the sheep is come back," but, "I have *found* the sheep which was lost." Men do not seek God first; God seeks them first; and if any of you are seeking him to-day it is because he has first sought you. If you are desiring him he desired you first, and your good desires and earnest seeking will not be the cause of your salvation, but the effects of previous grace given to you. "Well," says another, "I should have thought that although the Saviour might not require an earnest seeking and sighing and groaning, and a continuous searching after him, yet certainly he would have desired and demanded that every man, before he had grace, should ask for it." That, indeed, beloved, seems natural, and God *will* give grace to them that ask for it; but mark, the text says that he was manifested "to them that asked not for him." That is to say, before we ask, God gives us grace. The only reason why any man ever begins to pray, is because God has put previous grace in his heart which leads him to pray. I remember, when I was converted to God, I was an Arminian thoroughly. I thought I had begun the good work myself, and I used sometimes to sit down and think, "Well, I sought the Lord four years before I found him," and I think I began to compliment myself upon the fact that I had perseveringly entreated of him in the midst of much discouragement. But one day the thought struck me, "How was it you came to seek God?" and in an instant the answer came from my soul, "Why, because he led me to do it; he must first have shown me my need of him, or else I should never have sought him; he must have shown me his preciousness, or I never should have thought him worth seeking;" and at once I saw the doctrines of grace as clear as possible. God must begin. Nature can never rise above itself. You put water into a reservoir, and it will rise as high as that, but no higher if let alone. Now, it is not in human nature to seek the Lord. Human nature is depraved, and therefore, there must be the extraordinary pressure of the Holy Spirit put upon the heart to lead us first to ask for mercy. But mark, we do not know anything about that, while the Spirit is operating; we find that out afterwards. We ask as much as if we were asking all of ourselves. Our business is to seek the Lord as if there were no Holy Spirit at all. But although we do not know it, there must always be a previous motion of the Spirit in our heart, before there will be a motion of our heart towards him.

"No sinner can be beforehand with thee.

Thy grace is most sovereign, most rich, and most free."

Let me give you an illustration. You see that man on his horse surrounded by

a body of troopers. How proud he is, and how he reins up his horse with conscious dignity. Sir, what have you got there? What are those despatches you treasure up with so much care? "Oh, sir, I have that in my hand that will vex the church of God in Damascus. I have dragged the fellows into the synagogue, both men and women; I have scourged them, and compelled them to blaspheme; and I have this commission from the high priest to drag them to Jerusalem; that I may put them to death." Saul! Saul! have you no love for Christ? "Love to him! No. When they stoned Stephen, I took care of the witnesses' clothes, and I rejoiced to do it. I wish I had had the crucifying of their Master, for I hate them with perfect hatred, and I breathe out threatenings and slaughter against them." What do you say of this man? If he be saved, will you not grant that it must be some Divine sovereignty that converts him? Look at poor Pilate, how much there was that was hopeful in him. He was willing to save the Master, but he feared and trembled. If we had had our choice, we should have said, "Lord, save Pilate, he does not want to kill Christ, he labours to let him escape; but slay the bloodthirsty Saul, he is the very chief of sinners." "No," says God, "I will do as I will with mine own." The heavens open, and the brightness of glory descends—brighter than the noon-day sun. Stunned with the light he falls to the ground, and a voice is heard addressing him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." He rises up; God appears to him: "Lo, I have made thee a chosen vessel to bear my name among the Gentiles." Is not that sovereignty—sovereign grace, without any previous seeking? God was found of him that sought not for him; he manifested himself to one that asked him not. Some will say, that was a miracle; but it is one that is repeated every day in the week. I knew a man once, who had not been to the house of God for a long time; and one Sunday morning, having been to market to buy a pair of ducks for his Sunday dinner, he happened to see a house of God opened as he was passing by. "Well," he thought, "I will hear what these fellows are up to." He went inside; the hymn that was being sung struck his attention; he listened to the sermon, forgot his ducks, discovered his own character, went home, and threw himself upon his knees before God, and after a short time it pleased God to give him joy and peace in believing. That man had nothing in him to begin with, nothing that could have led you to imagine he ever would be saved, but simply because God would have it so, he struck the effectual blow of grace, and the man was brought to himself. But we are, each of us who are saved, the very people who are the best illustrations of the matter. To this day, my wonder is, that ever the Lord should have chosen me. I cannot make it out; and my only answer to the question is, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

I have now, I think, stated the doctrine pretty plainly. Let me only say a few words about it. Some people are very much afraid of this truth. They say, "It is true, I dare say, but still you ought not to preach it before a mixed assembly; it is very well for the comfort of God's people, but it is to be very carefully handled, and not to be publicly preached upon." Very well, sir, I leave you to settle that matter with my Master. He gave me this great book to preach from, and I cannot preach from anything else. If he has put anything in it you think is not fit, go and complain to him, and not to me. I am simply his servant, and if his errand that I am to tell is objectionable, I cannot help it. If I send my servant to the door with a message, and he delivers it faithfully, he does not deserve to be scolded. Let *me* have the blame, not the servant. So I say; blame my Master, and not me, for I do but proclaim his message. "No," says one, "it is not to be *preached*." But it is to be preached. Every word of God is given by inspiration, and it is profitable for some good end. Does not the Bible say so? Let me tell you, the reason why many of our churches are declining is just because this doctrine has not been preached. Wherever this doctrine has been upheld, it has always been "Down with Popery." The first reformers held this doctrine and preached it. Well said a Church of England divine to some who railed at him, "Look at your own Luther. Do you not consider him to be the teacher of the Church of England? What Calvin and the other reformers taught is to be found in his book upon the freedom of the will." Besides, we can point you to a string of ministers from the beginning even until now. Talk of apostolic succession! The man who preaches the doctrines of grace has an apostolic succession indeed. Can we not trace our pedigree through a whole line of men like Newton, and Whitfield, and Owen, and Bunyan, straight away on till we come

to Calvin, Luther, and Zwingle; and then we can go back from them to Savonarola, to Jerome of Prague, to Huss, and then back to Augustine, the mighty preacher of Christianity; and from St. Augustine to Paul is but one step. We need not be ashamed of our pedigree; although Calvinists are now considered to be heterodox, we are and ever must be orthodox. It is the old doctrine. Go and buy any puritanical book, and see if you can find Arminianism in it. Search all the book stalls over, and see if you can find one large folio book of olden times that has anything in it but the doctrine of the free grace of God. Let this once be brought to bear upon the minds of men, and away go the doctrines of penance and confession, away goes paying for the pardon of your sin. If grace be free and sovereign in the hand of God, down goes the doctrine of priestcraft, away go buying and selling indulgences and such like things; they are swept to the four winds of heaven, and the efficacy of good works is dashed in pieces like Dagon before the ark of the Lord. "Well," says one, "I like the doctrine; still there are very few that preach it, and those that do are very high." Very likely; but I care little what anybody calls me. It signifies very little what men call you. Suppose they call you a "hyper," that does not make you anything wicked, does it? Suppose they call you an Antinomian, that will not make you one. I must confess, however, that there are some men who preach this doctrine who are doing ten thousand times more harm than good, because they don't preach the next doctrine I am going to proclaim, which is just as true. They have this to be the sail, but they have not the other to be the ballast. They can preach one side, but not the other. They can go along with the high doctrine, but they will not preach the whole of the Word. Such men caricature the Word of God. And just let me say here, that it is the custom of a certain body of Ultra-Calvinists, to call those of us who teach that it is the duty of man to repent and believe, "Mongrel Calvinists." If you hear any of them say so, give them my most respectful compliments, and ask them whether they ever read Calvin's works in their lives. Not that I care what Calvin said or did not say; but ask them whether they ever read his works; and if they say "No," as they must say, for there are forty-eight large volumes, you can tell them, that the man whom they call "a Mongrel Calvinist," though he has not read them all, has read a very good share of them, and knows their spirit; and he knows that he preaches substantially what Calvin preached—that every doctrine he preaches may be found in Calvin's Commentaries on some part of Scripture or other. We are true Calvinists, however. Calvin is nobody to us. Jesus Christ and him crucified, and the old fashioned Bible, are our standards. Beloved, let us take God's Word as it stands. If we find high doctrine there, let it be high; if we find low doctrine, let it be low; let us set up no other standard than the Bible affords.

II. Now then for the second point. "There now," says my ultra friend, "he is going to contradict himself." No, my friend, I am not, I am only going to contradict *you*. The second point is MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY. "But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Now, these people whom God had cast away had been wooed, had been sought, had been entreated to be saved; but they would not, and inasmuch as they were not saved, it was the effect of their disobedience and their gainsaying. That lies clearly enough in the text. When God sent the prophets to Israel, and stretched forth his hands, what was it for? What did he wish them to come to him for? Why, to be saved. "No," says one, "it was for temporal mercies." Not so, my friend; the verse before is concerning spiritual mercies, and so is this one, for they refer to the same thing. Now, was God sincere in his offer? God forgive the man that dares to say he was not. God is undoubtedly sincere in every act he did. He sent his prophets, he entreated the people of Israel to lay hold on spiritual things, but they would not, and though he stretched out his hands all the day long, yet they were "a disobedient and gainsaying people," and would not have his love; and on their head rests their blood.

Now let me notice the wooing of God and of what sort it is. First, it was the most affectionate wooing in the world. Lost sinners who sit under the sound of the gospel are not lost for the want of the most affectionate invitation. God says he stretched out his hands. You know what that means. You have seen the child who is disobedient and will not come to his father. The father puts out his hands, and says, "Come, my child, come; I am ready to forgive you." The tear is in his eye, and his bowels move with compassion, and he says, "Come,

come." God says this is what *he* did—"he stretched out his hands." That is what he has done to some of you. You that are not saved to-day are without excuse, for God stretched out his hands to you, and he said, "Come, come." Long have you sat beneath the sound of the ministry, and it has been a faithful one, I trust, and a weeping one. Your minister has not forgotten to pray for your souls in secret or to weep over you when no eye saw him, and he has endeavoured to persuade you as an ambassador from God. God is my witness, I have sometimes stood in this pulpit, and I could not have pleaded harder for my own life than I have pleaded with you. In Christ's name, I have cried, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." I have wept over you as the Saviour did, and used his words on his behalf, "O Jerusalem. Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." And you know that your conscience has often been touched; you have often been moved; you could not resist it. God was so kind to you; he invited you so affectionately by the Word; he dealt so gently with you by his providence; his hands were stretched out, and you could hear his voice speaking in your ears, "Come unto me, come: come now, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow." You have heard him cry, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." You have heard him say with all the affection of a father's heart, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Oh! God does plead with men that they would be saved, and this day he says to every one of you, "Repent, and be converted for the remission of your sins. Turn ye unto me. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; consider your ways." And with love divine he woos you as a father woos his child, putting out his hands and crying, "Come unto me, come unto me." "No," says one strong-doctrine man, "God never invites all men to himself; he invites none but certain characters." Stop, sir, that is all you know about it. Did you ever read that parable where it is said, "My oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." And they that were bidden *would not come*. And did you never read that they all began to make excuse, and that they were punished because they did not accept the invitations. Now, if the invitation is not to be made to anybody, but to the man who will accept it, how can that parable be true? The fact is, the oxen and fatlings are killed; the wedding feast is ready, and the trumpet sounds, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come and eat, come and drink." Here are the provisions spread, here is an all-sufficiency; the invitation is free; it is a great invitation without limitation. "*Whosoever will*, let him come and take of the water of life freely." And that invitation is couched in tender words, "Come to me, my child, come to me." "All day long I have stretched forth my hands."

And note again, this invitation was very *frequent*. The words, "all the day long," may be translated "daily"—"Daily have I stretched forth my hands." Sinner, God has not called you once to come, and then let you alone, but every day has he been at you; every day has conscience spoken to you; every day has providence warned you, and every Sabbath has the Word of God wooed you. Oh! how much some of you will have to account for at God's great bar! I cannot now read your characters, but I know there are some of you who will have a terrible account at last. All the day long has God been wooing you. From the first dawn of your life, he wooed you through your mother, and she used to put your little hands together, and teach you to say,

"Gentle Jesus meek and mild,
Look upon a little child,
Pity my simplicity;
Suffer me to come to thee."

And in your boyhood God was still stretching out his hands after you. How your Sunday-school teacher endeavoured to bring you to the Saviour! How often your youthful heart was affected; but you put all that away, and you are still untouched by it. How often did your mother speak to you, and your father warn you; and you have forgotten the prayer in that bed-room when you were sick, when your mother kissed your burning forehead, knelt down and prayed to God to spare your

life, and then added that prayer, "Lord, save my boy's soul!" And you recollect the Bible she gave you, when you first went out apprentice, and the prayer she wrote on that yellow front leaf. When she gave it, you did not perhaps know, but you may *now*; how earnestly she longed after you, that you might be formed anew in Christ Jesus; how she followed you with her prayers, and how she entreated with her God for you. And you have not yet surely forgotten how many Sabbaths you have spent, and how many times you have been warned. Why you have had waggon-loads of sermons wasted on you. A hundred and four sermons you have heard every year, and some of you more, and yet you are still just what you were.

But sinners, sermon hearing is an awful thing unless it is blessed to our souls. If God has kept on stretching out his hands every day and all the day, it will be a hard thing for you when you shall be justly condemned not only for your breaches of the law, but for your wilful rejection of the gospel. It is probable that God will keep on stretching out his hands to you until your hairs grow grey, still continually inviting you: and perhaps when you are nearing death he will still say, "Come unto me, come unto me." But if you still persist in hardening your heart, if still you reject Christ, I beseech you let nothing make you imagine that you shall go unpunished. Oh! I do tremble sometimes when I think of that class of ministers who tell sinners that they are not guilty if they do not seek the Saviour. How they shall be found innocent at God's great day I do not know. It seems to be a fearful thing that they should be lulling poor souls into sleep by telling them it is not their duty to seek Christ and repent, but that they may do as they like about that, and that when they perish they will be none the more guilty for having heard the Word. My Master did not say that. Remember how he said, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee." Jesus did not talk thus when he spoke to Chorazin and Bethsaida; for he said, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sack-cloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you." It was not the way Paul preached. He did not tell sinners that there was no guilt in despising the cross. Hear the apostle's words once more: "For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward, *how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation*, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." Sinner, at the great day of God thou must give an account for every warning thou hast ever had, for every time thou hast read thy Bible, ay, and for every time thou hast neglected to read it; for every Sunday when the house of God was open and thou didst neglect to avail thyself of the opportunity of hearing the Word, and for every time thou didst hear it and didst not improve it. Ye who are careless hearers, are tying faggots for your own burning for ever. Ye that hear and straightway forget, or hear with levity, are digging for yourselves a pit into which ye must be cast. Remember, no one will be responsible for your damnation but yourself, at the last great day. God will not be responsible for it. "As I live saith the Lord"—and that is a great oath—"I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." God has done much for you. He sent you his Gospel. You are not born in a heathen land; he has given you the Book of Books; he has given you an enlightened conscience; and if you perish under the sound of the ministry, you perish more fearfully and terribly, than if you had perished anywhere else.

This doctrine is as much God's Word as the other. You ask me to reconcile the two. I answer, they do not want any reconciliation; I never tried to reconcile them to myself, because I could never see a discrepancy. If you begin to put fifty or sixty quibbles to me, I cannot give any answer. Both are true; no two truths can be inconsistent with each other; and what you have to do is to believe them both. With the first one, the saint has most to do. Let him praise the free and sovereign grace of God, and bless his name. With the second, the sinner has the most to do. O sinner, humble thyself under the mighty hand of God, when thou thinkest of how often he hath shown his love to thee, by bidding thee come to

himself, and yet how often thou hast spurned his Word and refused his mercy, and turned a deaf ear to every invitation, and hast gone thy way to rebel against a God of love, and violate the commands of him that loved thee.

And now, how shall I conclude? My first exhortation shall be to Christian people. My dear friends, I beseech you do not in any way give yourselves up to any system of faith apart from the Word of God. The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants: I am the successor of the great and venerated Dr. Gill, whose theology is almost universally received among the stronger Calvinistic churches; but although I venerate his memory, and believe his teachings, yet he is not my Rabbi. What you find in God's Word is for you to believe and to receive. Never be frightened at a doctrine; and above all, never be frightened at a name. Some one said to me the other day, that he thought the truth lay somewhere between the two extremes. He meant right, but I think he was wrong. I do not think the truth lies between the two extremes, but in them both. I believe the higher a man goes the better, when he is preaching the matter of salvation. The reason why a man is saved is grace, grace, grace; and you may go as high as you like there. But when you come to the question as to why men are damned, then the Arminian is far more right than the Antinomian. I care not for any denomination or party, I am as high as Huntingdon upon the matter of *salvation*, but question me about damnation, and you will get a very different answer. By the grace of God I ask no man's applause, I preach the Bible as I find it. Where we get wrong is where the Calvinist begins to meddle with the question of damnation, and interferes with the justice of God; or when the Arminian denies the doctrine of grace.

My second exhortation is,—Sinners, I beseech every one of you who are unconverted and ungodly, this morning to put away every form and fashion of excuse that the devil would have you make concerning your being unconverted. Remember, that all the teaching in the world can never excuse you for being enemies to God by wicked works. When we beseech you to be reconciled to him, it is because we know you will never be in your proper place until you are reconciled. God has made you; can it be right that you should disobey him? God feeds you every day: can it be right that you should still live in disobedience to him? Remember, when the heavens shall be on a blaze, when Christ shall come to judge the earth in righteousness and his people with equity, there will not be one excuse that you can make which will be valid at the last great day. If you should attempt to say, "Lord, I have never heard the word;" his answer would be, "Thou didst hear it; thou heardest it plainly." "But Lord, I had an evil will." "Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee; thou hadst that evil will, and I condemn thee for it. This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." "But Lord," some will say, "I was not predestinated." "What hadst thou to do with that? Thou didst do according to thine own will when thou didst rebel. Thou wouldest not come unto me, and now I destroy thee for ever. Thou hast broken my law—on thine own head be the guilt." If a sinner could say at the great day, "Lord, I could not be saved anyhow;" his torment in hell would be mitigated by that thought: but this shall be the very edge of the sword, and the very burning of the fire—"Ye knew your duty and ye did it not: ye trampled on everything that was holy; ye neglected the Saviour, and how shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?"

Now, with regard to myself; you may some of you go away and say, that I was Antinomian in the first part of the sermon and Arminian at the end. I care not. I beg of you to search the Bible for yourselves. To the law and to the testimony; if I speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in me. I am willing to come to that test. Have nothing to do with me where I have nothing to do with Christ. Where I separate from the truth, cast my words away. But if what I say be God's teaching, I charge you, by him that sent me, give these things your thoughts, and turn unto the Lord with all your hearts.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE WARRANT OF FAITH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 20TH, 1863, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ."—1 John iii. 23.

THE old law shines in terrible glory with its ten commandments. There are some who love that law so much, that they cannot pass over a Sabbath without its being read in their hearing, accompanied by the mournful petition, "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law." Nay, some are so foolish as to enter into a covenant for their children, that "they shall keep all God's holy commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life." Thus they early wear a yoke which neither they nor their fathers can bear, and daily groaning under its awful weight, they labour after righteousness where it never can be found. Over the tables of the law in every Church, I would have conspicuously printed these gospel words, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." The true believer has learned to look away from the killing ordinances of the old law. He understands that "as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written: Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." He therefore turns with loathing from all trust in his own obedience to the ten commands, and lays hold with joy upon the hope set before him in the one commandment contained in my text, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ."

We sing, and sing rightly too—

"My soul, no more attempt to draw
Thy life and comfort from the law,"

for from the law death cometh and not life, misery and not comfort. "To convince and to condemn is all the law can do." O, when will all professors, and especially all professed ministers of Christ, learn the difference between the law and the gospel? Most of them make a mangle-mangle, and serve out deadly potions to the people, often containing but one ounce of gospel to a pound of law, whereas, but even a grain of law is enough to spoil the whole thing. It must be gospel, and gospel only. "If it be of grace, it is not of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; and if it be of works, then it is not of grace, otherwise work is no more work."

The Christian then, turning his attention to the one command of the
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gospel, is very anxious to know first, *what is the matter of the believing here intended*; and secondly, *what is the sinner's warrant for so believing in Christ*; nor will he fail to consider *the mandate of the gospel*.

I. First then, THE MATTER OF BELIEVING, or what is it that a man is to believe in order to eternal life. Is it the Athanasian creed? Is it true, that if a man does not hold that confession whole and entire, he shall without doubt perish everlastingly? We leave those to decide who are learned in matters of bigotry. Is it any particular form of doctrine? Is it the Calvinistic or the Arminian scheme? For our own part we are quite content with our text—believing on “his Son Jesus Christ.” That faith which saves the soul is believing on a person, depending upon Jesus for eternal life.

To speak more at large of the things which are to be believed in order to justification by faith, they all relate to the person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must believe him to be God's Son—so the text puts it—“His Son.” We must grasp with strong confidence the great fact that he is God: for nothing short of a divine Saviour can ever deliver us from the infinite wrath of God. He who rejects the true and proper Godhead of Jesus of Nazareth, is not saved, and cannot be, for he believes not on Jesus as God's Son. Furthermore, we must accept this Son of God as “Jesus,” the Saviour. We must believe that Jesus Christ the Son of God, became man out of infinite love to man, that he might save his people from their sins, according to that worthy saying, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” even the chief. We must look upon Jesus as “Christ,” the anointed of the Father, sent into this world on salvation's errand, not that sinners might save themselves, but that he, being mighty to save, might bring many sons unto glory. We must believe that Jesus Christ, coming into the world to save sinners, did really effect his mission; that the precious blood which is shed upon Calvary is almighty to atone for sin, and therefore, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, since the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin. We must heartily accept the great doctrine of the atonement—regarding Jesus as standing in the room, place, and stead of sinful men, bearing for them the terror of the law's curse until justice was satisfied and could demand no more. Moreover, we should rejoice that as Jesus Christ, by his dying, put away for ever the sin of his people, so by his living he gave unto those who trust in him a perfect righteousness, in which, despite their own sins, they are “accepted in the beloved.” We are also taught, that if we heartily trust our soul with Christ, our sins, through his blood, are forgiven, and his righteousness is imputed to us. The mere knowledge of these facts will not, however, save us, unless we really and truly trust our souls in the Redeemer's hands. Faith must act in this wise: “I believe that Jesus came to save sinners, and therefore, sinner though I be, I rest myself on him; I know that his righteousness justifies the ungodly; I, therefore, though ungodly, trust in him to be my righteousness; I know that his precious blood in heaven prevails with God on the behalf of them that come unto him; and since I come unto him, I know by faith that I have an interest in his perpetual intercession.”

Now, I have enlarged the one thought of believing on God's Son

Jesus Christ. Brethren, I would not darken counsel by words without knowledge. "Believing" is most clearly explained by that simple word "trust." Believing is partly the intellectual operation of receiving divine truths, but the essence of it lies in relying upon those truths. I believe that, although I cannot swim, yonder friendly plank will support me in the flood—I grasp it, and am saved: the grasp is faith. I am promised by a generous friend that if I draw upon his banker, he will supply all my needs—I joyously confide in him, and as often as I am in want I go to the bank, and am enriched: my going to the bank is faith. Thus faith is accepting God's great promise, contained in the person of his Son. It is taking God at his word, and trusting in Jesus Christ as being my salvation, although I am utterly unworthy of his regard. Sinner, if thou takest Christ to be thy Saviour this day, thou art justified; though thou be the biggest blasphemer and persecutor out of hell, if thou darest to trust Christ with thy salvation, that faith of thine saves thee; though thy whole life may have been as black, and foul, and devilish as thou couldst have made it, yet if thou wilt honour God by believing Christ is able to forgive such a wretch as thou art, and wilt now trust in Jesus' precious blood, thou art saved from divine wrath.

II. The WARRANT OF BELIEVING is the point upon which I shall spend my time and strength this morning. According to my text, the warrant for a man to believe is the *commandment* of God. This is the commandment, that ye "believe on his Son Jesus Christ."

Self-righteousness will always find a lodging somewhere or other. Drive it, my brethren, out of the ground of our confidence; let the sinner see that he cannot rest on his good works, then, as foxes will have holes, this self-righteousness will find a refuge for itself in the warrant of our faith in Christ. It reasons thus: "You are not saved by what you do but by what Christ did; but then, you have no right to trust in Christ unless there is something good in you which shall entitle you to trust in him." Now, this legal reasoning I oppose. I believe such teaching to contain in it the essence of Popish self-righteousness. The warrant for a sinner to believe in Christ is not in himself in any sense or in any manner, but in the fact that he is commanded there and then to believe on Jesus Christ. Some preachers in the Puritanic times, whose shoe latches I am not worthy to unloose, erred much in this matter. I refer not merely to Alleyne and Baxter, who are far better preachers of the law than of the gospel, but I include men far sounder in the faith than they, such as Rogers of Dedham, Shepherd, the author of "The Sound Believer," and especially the American, Thomas Hooker, who has written a book upon qualifications for coming to Christ. These excellent men had a fear of preaching the gospel to any except those whom they styled "sensible sinners," and consequently kept hundreds of their hearers sitting in darkness when they might have rejoiced in the light. They preached repentance and hatred of sin as the warrant of a sinner's trusting to Christ. According to them, a sinner might reason thus—"I possess such-and-such a degree of sensibility on account of sin, therefore I have a right to trust in Christ." Now, I venture to affirm that such reasoning is seasoned with fatal error. Whoever preaches in this fashion may preach much of the gospel, but the whole gospel of the free grace of God in its fulness he has yet to learn. In

our own day certain preachers assure us that a man must be regenerated before we may bid him believe in Jesus Christ ; some degree of a work of grace in the heart being, in their judgment, the only warrant to believe. This also is false. It takes away a gospel for sinners and offers us a gospel for saints. It is anything but a ministry of free grace.

Others say that the warrant for a sinner to believe in Christ is his election. Now, as his election cannot possibly be known by any man until he has believed, this is virtually preaching that nobody has any known warrant for believing at all. If I cannot possibly know my election before I believe—and yet the minister tells me that I may only believe upon the ground of my election—how am I ever to believe at all ? Election brings me faith, and faith is the evidence of my election ; but to say that my faith is to depend upon my knowledge of my election, which I cannot get without faith, is to talk egregious nonsense.

I lay down this morning with great boldness—because I know and am well persuaded that what I speak is the mind of the Spirit—this doctrine that the sole and only warrant for a sinner to believe in Jesus is found in the gospel itself and in the command which accompanies that gospel, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” I shall deal with that matter first of all, *negatively*, and then, *positively*.

1. First, **NEGATIVELY** ; and here my first observation is that any other way of preaching the gospel-warrant is *absurd*. If I am to preach faith in Christ to a man who is regenerated, then the man, being regenerated, is saved already, and it is an unnecessary and ridiculous thing for me to preach Christ to him, and bid him to believe in order to be saved when he is saved already, being regenerate. But you will tell me that I ought to preach it only to those who repent of their sins. Very well ; but since true repentance of sin is the work of the Spirit, any man who has repentance is most certainly saved, because evangelical repentance never can exist in an unrenewed soul. Where there is repentance there is faith already, for they never can be separated. So, then, I am only to preach faith to those who have it. Absurd, indeed ! Is not this waiting till the man is cured and then bringing him the medicine ? This is preaching Christ to the righteous and not to sinners. “Nay,” saith one, “but we mean that a man must have some good desires towards Christ before he has any warrant to believe in Jesus.” Friend, do you not know that all good desires have some degree of holiness in them ? But if a sinner hath any degree of true holiness in him it must be the work of the Spirit, for true holiness never exists in the carnal mind, therefore, that man is already renewed, and therefore saved. Are we to go running up and down the world, proclaiming life to the living, casting bread to those who are fed already, and holding up Christ on the pole of the gospel to those who are already healed ? My brethren, where is our inducement to labour where our efforts are so little needed ? If I am to preach Christ to those who have no goodness, who have nothing in them that qualifies them for mercy, then I feel I have a gospel so divine that I would proclaim it with my last breath, crying aloud, that “Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*”—sinners as sinners, not as penitent sinners or as awakened sinners, but sinners as sinners, sinners “of whom I am chief.”

Secondly, to tell the sinner that he is to believe on Christ because of

some warrant in himself, is *legal*, I dare to say it—legal. Though this method is generally adopted by the higher school of Calvinists, they are herein unsound, uncalvinistic, and legal; it is strange that they who are so bold defenders of free grace should make common cause with Baxterians and Pelagians. I lay it down to be legal for this reason: if I believe in Jesus Christ because I feel a genuine repentance of sin, and therefore have a warrant for my faith, do you not perceive that the first and true ground of my confidence is the fact that I have repented of sin? If I believe in Jesus because I have convictions and a spirit of prayer, then evidently the first and the most important fact is not Christ, but my possession of repentance, conviction, and prayer, so that really my hope hinges upon my having repented; and if this be not legal I do not know what is. Put it lower. My opponents will say, "The sinner must have an awakened conscience before he is warranted to believe on Christ." Well, then, if I trust Christ to save me because I have an awakened conscience, I say again, the most important part of the whole transaction is the alarm of my conscience, and my real trust hangs there. If I lean on Christ because I feel this and that, then I am leaning on my feelings and not on Christ alone, and this is legal indeed. Nay, even if desires after Christ are to be my warrant for believing, if I am to believe in Jesus not because he bids me, but because I feel some desires after him, you will again with half an eye perceive that the most important source of my comfort must be my own desires. So that we shall be always looking within. "Do I really desire? If I do, then Christ can save me; if I do not, then he cannot." And so my desire overrides Christ and his grace. Away with such legality from the earth!

Again, any other way of preaching than that of bidding the sinner believe because God commands him to believe, is a *boasting* way of faith. For if my warrant to trust in Jesus be found in my experience, my loathings of sin, or my longings after Christ, then all these good things of mine are a legitimate ground of boasting, because though Christ may save me, yet these were the wedding-dress which fitted me to come to Christ. If these be indispensable pre-requisites and conditions, then the man who has them may truly and justly say, "Christ did save me, but I had the pre-requisites and conditions first, and therefore let these share the praise." See, my brethren, those who have a faith which rests upon their own experience, what are they as a rule? Mark them, and you will perceive much censorious bitterness in them, prompting them to set up their own experience as the standard of saintship, which may assuredly make us suspicious whether they ever were humbled in a gospel manner at all, so as to see that their own best feelings, and best repentances, and best experiences in themselves are nothing more nor less than filthy rags in the sight of God. My dear brethren, when we tell a sinner that foul and filthy as he is, without any preparation or qualification, he is to take Jesus Christ to be his all in all, finding in him all that he can ever need, when we dare on the spot to bid the jailor just startled out of sleep, "Believe in Jesus," we leave no room for self-glorification, all must be of grace. When we find the lame man lying at the temple gates, we do not bid him strengthen his own legs, or feel some life in them, but we bid him in the name of Jesus rise up

and walk ; surely here when God the Spirit owns the Word, all boasting is excluded. Whether I rely on my experience or my good works makes little difference, for either of these reliances will lead to boasting since they are both legal. Law and boasting are twin brothers, but free grace and gratitude always go together.

Any other warrant for believing on Jesus than that which is presented in the gospel is *changeable*. See, brethren, if my warrant to believe in Christ lies in my meltings of heart and my experiences, then if to-day I have a melting heart and I can pour my soul out before the Lord, I have a warrant to believe in Christ. But to-morrow (who does not know this?) to-morrow my heart may be as hard as a stone, so that I can neither feel nor pray. Then, according to the qualification-theory, I have no right to trust in Christ, my warrant is clean gone from me. According to the doctrine of final perseverance, the Christian's faith is continual, if so the warrant of his faith must be always the same, or else he has sometimes an unwarranted faith which is absurd; it follows from this that the abiding warrant of faith must lie in some immutable truth. Since everything within changes more frequently than ever does an English sky, if my warrant to believe in Christ be based within, it must change every hour; consequently I am lost and saved alternately. Brethren, can these things be so? For my part I want a sure and immutable warrant for my faith; I want a warrant to believe in Jesus which will serve me when the devil's blasphemy comes pouring into my ears like a flood; I want a warrant to believe which will serve me when my lustings and corruptions appear in terrible array, and make me cry out, "O wretched man that I am." I want a warrant to believe in Christ which will comfort me when I have no good frames and holy feelings, when I am dead as a stone and my spirit lies cleaving to the dust. Such an unfailing warrant to belief in Jesus is found in this precious truth, that his gracious commandment and not my variable experience, is my title to believe on his Son Jesus Christ.

Again, my brethren, any other warrant is utterly *incomprehensible*. Multitudes of my brethren preach an impossible salvation. How often do poor sinners hunger and thirst to know the way of salvation, and there is no available salvation preached to them. Personally, I do not remember to have been told from the pulpit to believe in Jesus as a sinner. I heard much of feelings which I thought I could never get, and frames after which I longed; but I found no peace until a true, free grace message came to me, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." See, my brethren, if convictions of soul are necessary qualifications for Christ, we ought to know to an ounce how much of these qualifications are needed. If you tell a poor sinner that there is a certain amount of humblings, and tremblings, and convictions, and heart-searchings to be felt, in order that he may be warranted to come to Christ, I demand of all legal-gospellers distinct information as to the manner and exact degree of preparation required. Brethren, you will find when these gentlemen are pushed into a corner, they will not agree, but will every one give a different standard, according to his own judgment. One will say the sinner must have months of law work; another, that he only needs good desires; and some will demand that he possess the graces of the Spirit—such as humility, godly sorrow,

and love to holiness. You will get no clear answer from them. If the sinner's warrant to come is found in the gospel itself, the matter is clear and plain; but what a roundabout plan is that compound of law and gospel against which I contend! And let me ask you, my brethren, whether such an incomprehensible gospel would do for a dying man? There he lies in the agonies of death. He tells me that he has no good thought or feeling, and asks what he must do to be saved. There is but a step between him and death—another five minutes and that man's soul may be in hell. What am I to tell him? Am I to be an hour explaining to him the preparation required before he may come to Christ? Brethren, I dare not. But I tell him, "Believe, brother, even though it be the eleventh hour; trust thy soul with Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." There is the same gospel for a living man as for a dying man. The thief on the cross may have had some experience, but I do not find him pleading it; he turns his eye to Jesus, saying, "Lord, remember me!" How prompt is the reply, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." He may have had longing desires, he may have had deep convictions, but I am quite sure he did not say, "Lord, I dare not ask thee to remember me, because I do not feel I have repented enough. I dare not trust thee, because I have not been shaken over hell's mouth." No, no, no; he looked to Jesus as he was, and Jesus responded to his believing prayer. It must be so with you, my brethren, for any other plan but that of a sinner's coming to Christ *as a sinner*, and resting on Jesus just as he is, is utterly incomprehensible, or, if it is to be explained at all, will require a day or two to explain it in; and that cannot be the gospel which the apostles preached to dying men.

Yet again, I believe that the preaching of alarms of conscience and repentance as qualifications for Christ, is *unacceptable* to the awakened sinner. I will introduce one, as Saltmarsh does in his "Flowings of Christ's Blood Freely to the Chief of Sinners." Here is a poor brother who dares not believe in Jesus. I will suppose him to have attended a ministry where the preaching is "If you have felt this, if you have felt that, then you may believe." When you went to your minister in trouble, what did he say to you? "He asked me whether I felt my need of Christ, I told him I did not think I did, at least I did not feel my need enough. He told me that I ought to meditate upon the guilt of sin, and consider the dreadful character of the wrath to come, and I might in this way feel my need more." Did you do so? "I did; but it seemed to me as if while I meditated upon the terrors of judgment, my heart grew harder instead of softer, and I seemed to be desperately set, and resolved in a kind of despair to go on in my ways; yet, sometimes I did have some humblings and some meltings of heart." What did your minister tell you to do to get comfort then? "He said I ought to pray much." Did you pray? "I told him I could not pray; that I was such a sinner that it was of no use for me to hope for an answer if I could." What did he say then? "He told me I ought to lay hold upon the promises." Yes, did you do so? "No; I told him I could not lay hold upon the promises; that I could not see they were meant for me, for I was not the character intended; and that I could only find threatenings in the Word of God for such as I was." What did he say then? "He told me to be diligent in the use of the means,

and to attend his ministry." What did you say to that? "I told him I was diligent, but that what I wanted was not means, I wanted to get my sins pardoned and forgiven." What did he say then? "Why, he said that I had better persevere and wait patiently for the Lord; I told him that I was in such a horror of great darkness, that my soul chose strangling rather than life. Well then, he said, he thought I must already be truly penitent, and was therefore safe, and that sooner or later I should have hope. But I told him, a mere hope was not enough for me, I could not be safe while sin lay so heavy upon me. He asked me whether I had not desires after Christ. I said I had, but they were merely selfish, carnal desires; that I sometimes thought I had desires, but they were only legal. He said if I had a desire to have a desire, it was God's work, and I was saved. That did prop me up for a time, sir, but I went down again, for that did not do for me, I wanted something solid to rest on." And sinner, how is it now with you? where are you now? "Well, sir, I scarce know where I am, but I pray you, tell me what I must do?" Brethren, my reply is prompt and plain; hear it. Poor soul, I have no questions to ask you; I have no advice to give you, except this, God's command to you is, whatever you may be, trust to the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. Will you do it or no? If he rejects that, I must leave him; I have no more to say to him; I am clear of his blood, and on him the sentence comes, "He that believeth not shall be damned." But you will find in ninety-nine cases out of one hundred, that when you begin to talk to the sinner, not about his repentings and his desirings, but about Christ, and tell him that he need not fear the law, for Christ has satisfied it; that he need not fear an angry God, for God is not angry with believers; tell him that all manner of iniquity was cast into the Red Sea of Jesus' blood, and, like the Egyptians, drowned there for ever; tell him that no matter however vile and wicked he may have been, "Christ is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him;" and tell him that he has a right to come, be he who he may, or what he may, because God bids him come; and you will find that the suitability of such a gospel to the sinner's case, will prove a sweet inducement in the hand of the Holy Spirit, to lead that sinner to lay hold on Jesus Christ. O my brethren, I am ashamed of myself when I think of the way in which I have sometimes talked to awakened sinners. I am persuaded that the only true remedy for a broken heart is Jesus Christ's most precious blood. Some surgeons keep a wound open too long; they keep cutting, and cutting, and cutting, till they cut away as much sound flesh as proud flesh. Better by half heal it, heal it at once, for Jesus Christ was not sent to keep open the wounds, but to bind up the broken in heart. To you, then, sinners of every sort and hue, black, hard-hearted, insensible, impenitent, even to you is the gospel sent, for "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," even the chief.

I might here pause, surely, but I must add yet one other point upon this negative mode of reasoning. Any other warrant for the sinner's faith than the gospel itself, is *false* and *dangerous*.

It is *false*, my brethren, it is as false as God is true, that anything in a sinner can be his warrant for believing in Jesus. The whole tenour

and run of the gospel is clean contrary to it. It must be false, because there is nothing in a sinner until he believes which can be a warrant for his believing. If you tell me that a sinner has any good thing in him before he believes, I reply, impossible—"Without faith it is impossible to please God." All the repentings, and humblings, and convictions that a sinner has before faith, must be, according to Scripture, displeasing to God. Do not tell me that his heart is broken; if it is only broken by carnal means, and trusts in its brokenness, it needs to be broken over again. Do not tell me he has been led to hate his sin; I tell you he does not hate his sin, he only hates hell. There cannot be a true and real hatred of sin where there is not faith in Jesus. All the sinner knows and feels before faith is only an addition to his other sins, and how can sin which deserves wrath be a warrant for an act which is the work of the Holy Spirit?

How *dangerous* is the sentiment I am opposing. My hearers, it may be so mischievous as to have misled some of you. I solemnly warn you, though you have been professors of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for twenty years, if your reason for believing in Christ lies in this, that you have felt the terrors of the law; that you have been alarmed, and have been convinced; if your own experience be your warrant for believing in Christ, it is a false reason, and you are really relying upon your experience and not upon Christ: and mark you, if you rely upon your frames and feelings, nay, if you rely upon your communion with Christ, in any degree whatever, you are as certainly a lost sinner as though you relied upon oaths and blasphemies; you shall no more be able to enter heaven, even by the works of the Spirit—and this is using strong language—than by your own works; for Christ, and Christ alone, is the foundation, and "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Take care of resting in your own experience. All that is of nature's spinning must be unravelled, and everything that getteth into Christ's place, however dear to thee, and however precious in itself, must be broken in pieces, and like the dust of the golden calf, must be strawed upon the water, and thou wilt be made sorrowfully to drink of it, because thou madest it thy trust. I believe that the tendency of that preaching which puts the warrant for faith anywhere but in the gospel command, is to vex the true penitent, and to console the hypocrite; the tendency of it is to make the poor soul which really repents, feel that he must not believe in Christ, because he sees so much of his own hardness of heart. The more spiritual a man is, the more unspiritual he sees himself to be; and the more penitent a man is, the more impenitent he discovers himself to be. Often the most penitent men are those who think themselves the most impenitent; and if I am to preach the gospel to the penitent and not to every sinner, as a sinner, then those penitent persons, who, according to my opponents, have the most right to believe, are the very persons who will never dare to touch it, because they are conscious of their own impenitence and want of all qualification for Christ. Sinners, let me address you with words of life: Jesus wants nothing of you, nothing whatsoever, nothing done, nothing felt; he gives both work and feeling. Ragged, penniless, just as ye are, lost, forsaken, desolate, with no good feelings, and no good hopes, still Jesus comes to you, and in these

words of pity he addresses you, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." If thou believest in him thou shalt never be confounded.

2. But now, **POSITIVELY**, and as the negative part has been positive enough, we will be brief here. The gospel command is a sufficient warrant for a sinner to believe in Jesus Christ. The *words of our text* imply this—"This is the commandment." My brethren, do you want any warrant for doing a thing better than God's command to do it? The children of Israel borrowed jewels of silver and jewels of gold from the Egyptians. Many, as they read the Bible, find fault with this transaction; but, to my mind, if God bade them do it, that was enough of justification for them. Very well; if God bid thee believe—if this be his commandment that thou believe—canst thou want a better warrant? I say, is there any necessity for any other. Surely the Lord's Word is enough.

Brethren, the command to believe in Christ must be the sinner's warrant, if you consider the nature of our commission. How runs it? "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." It ought to run, according to the other plan, "preach the gospel to every regenerate person, to every convinced sinner, to every sensible soul." But it is not so; it is to "every creature." But unless the warrant be a something in which every creature can take a share, there is no such thing as consistently preaching it to *every creature*. Then how is it put?—"He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." Where is there a word about the pre-requisites for believing. Surely the man could not be damned for not doing what he would not have been warranted in doing. Our preaching, on the theory of qualifications, should not be, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" but "Qualify yourselves for faith, be sensible of your sin, be regenerated, get marks and evidences, and then believe." Why, surely, if I am not to sow the good seed on the stony places and among the thorns, I had better give up being a sower, and take to ploughing, or some other work. When the apostles went to Macedonia or Achaia, they ought not to have commenced with preaching Christ; they should have preached up qualifications, emotions, and sensations, if these are the preparations for Jesus; but I find that Paul, whenever he stands up, has nothing to preach but "Christ, and him crucified." Repentance is preached as a gift from the exalted Saviour, but it is never as the cause or preparation for believing on Jesus. These two graces are born together, and live with a common life—beware of making one a foundation for the other. I would like to carry one of those who only preach to sensible sinners, and set him down in the capital of the kingdom of Dahomey. There are no sensible sinners there! Look at them, with their mouths stained with human blood, with their bodies smeared all over with the gore of their immolated victims—how will the preacher find any qualification there? I know not what he could say, but I know what my message would be. My word would run thus—"Men and brethren, God, who made the heavens and the earth, hath sent his Son Jesus Christ into the world to suffer for our sins, and whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." If Christ crucified did not shake the kingdom of Dahomey, it would be its first failure. When the Moravian missionaries first went to Greenland, you remember that they were months and

months teaching the poor Greenlander about the Godhead, the doctrine of the Trinity, and the doctrine of sin and the law, and no converts were forthcoming. But one day, by accident, one of the Greenlanders happening to read that passage, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God," asked the meaning, and the missionary, hardly thinking him advanced enough to understand the gospel, nevertheless ventured to explain it to him, and the man became converted, and hundreds of his countrymen received the Word. Naturally enough, they said to the missionaries, "Why did not you tell us this before? We knew all about there being a God, and that did us no good; why did not you come and tell us to believe in Jesus Christ before?" O my brethren, this is God's weapon, God's method; this is the great battering-ram which will shake the gates of hell; and we must see to it, that it be brought into daily use.

I have tried, on the positive side, to show that a free-grace warrant is consistent with the text—that it accords with apostolic custom, and is, indeed, absolutely necessary, seeing the condition in which sinners are placed. But, my brethren, to preach Christ to sinners, as sinners, must be right; for all the former acts of God are to sinners, as sinners. Whom did God elect? Sinners. He loved us with a great love, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins. How did he redeem them? Did he redeem them as saints? No; for while we were yet enemies, he reconciled us unto God by the death of his Son. Christ never shed his blood for the good that is in us, but for the sin that is in us. "He laid down his life for our sins," says the apostle. If, then, in election and redemption, we find God dealing with sinners, as sinners, it is a marring and nullifying of the whole plan if the gospel is to be preached to men as anything else but sinners.

Again, it is inconsistent with the character of God to suppose that he comes forth and proclaims, "If, O my fallen creatures, if you qualify yourselves for my mercy, I will save you; if you will feel holy emotions—if you will be conscious of sacred desires after me, then the blood of Jesus Christ shall cleanse you." There would be little which is godlike in that. But when he comes out with pardons full and free, and saith, "Yea, when ye lay in your blood, I said unto you Live"—when he comes to you, his enemy and rebellious subject, and yet cries, "I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thine iniquities." Why, this is divine. You know what David said, "I have sinned." What did Nathan say? "The Lord has put away thy sin, thou shalt not die," and that is the message of the gospel to a sinner as a sinner. "The Lord has put away thy sin; Christ has suffered; he has brought in perfect righteousness; take him, trust him, and ye shall live." May that message come home to you this morning, my beloved.

I have read with some degree of attention a book to which I owe much for this present discourse—a book, by Abraham Booth, called "Glad Tidings to Perishing Sinners." I have never heard any one cast a suspicion upon Abraham Booth's soundness; on the contrary, he has been generally considered as one of the most orthodox of the divines of the last generation. If you want my views in full, read his book. If you need something more, let me say, among all the bad things which his revilers have laid to his door, I have never heard any one blame William Huntingdon for not being

high enough in doctrine. Now, William Huntingdon prefaced in his lifetime a book by Saltmarsh, with which he was greatly pleased; and the marrow of its teaching is just this, in his own words, "The only ground for any to believe is, he is faithful that hath promised, not anything in themselves, for this is the commandment, That ye believe on his Son Jesus Christ." Now, if William Huntingdon himself printed such a book as that, I marvel how the followers of either William Huntingdon or Abraham Booth, how men calling themselves Calvinistic divines and high Calvinists, can advocate what is not free grace, but a legal, graceless system of qualifications and preparations. I might here quote Crisp, who is pat to the point and a high doctrine man too. I mention neither Booth nor Huntingdon as authorities upon the subject, to the law and to the testimony we must go; but I do mention them to show that men holding strong views on election and predestination yet did see it to be consistent to preach the gospel to sinners as sinners—nay, felt that it was inconsistent to preach the gospel in any other way.

I shall only add, that the blessings which flow from preaching Christ to sinners as sinners, are of such a character as prove it to be right. Do you not see that this *levels us all*? We have the same warrant for believing, and no one can exalt himself above his fellow.

Then, my brethren, how it inspires men with hope and confidence; *it forbids despair*. No man can despair if this be true; or if he do, it is a wicked, unreasonable despair, because if he has been never so bad, yet God commands him to believe. What room can there be for despondency? Surely if anything could cut off Giant Despair's head, Christ preached to sinners is the sharp two-edged sword to do it.

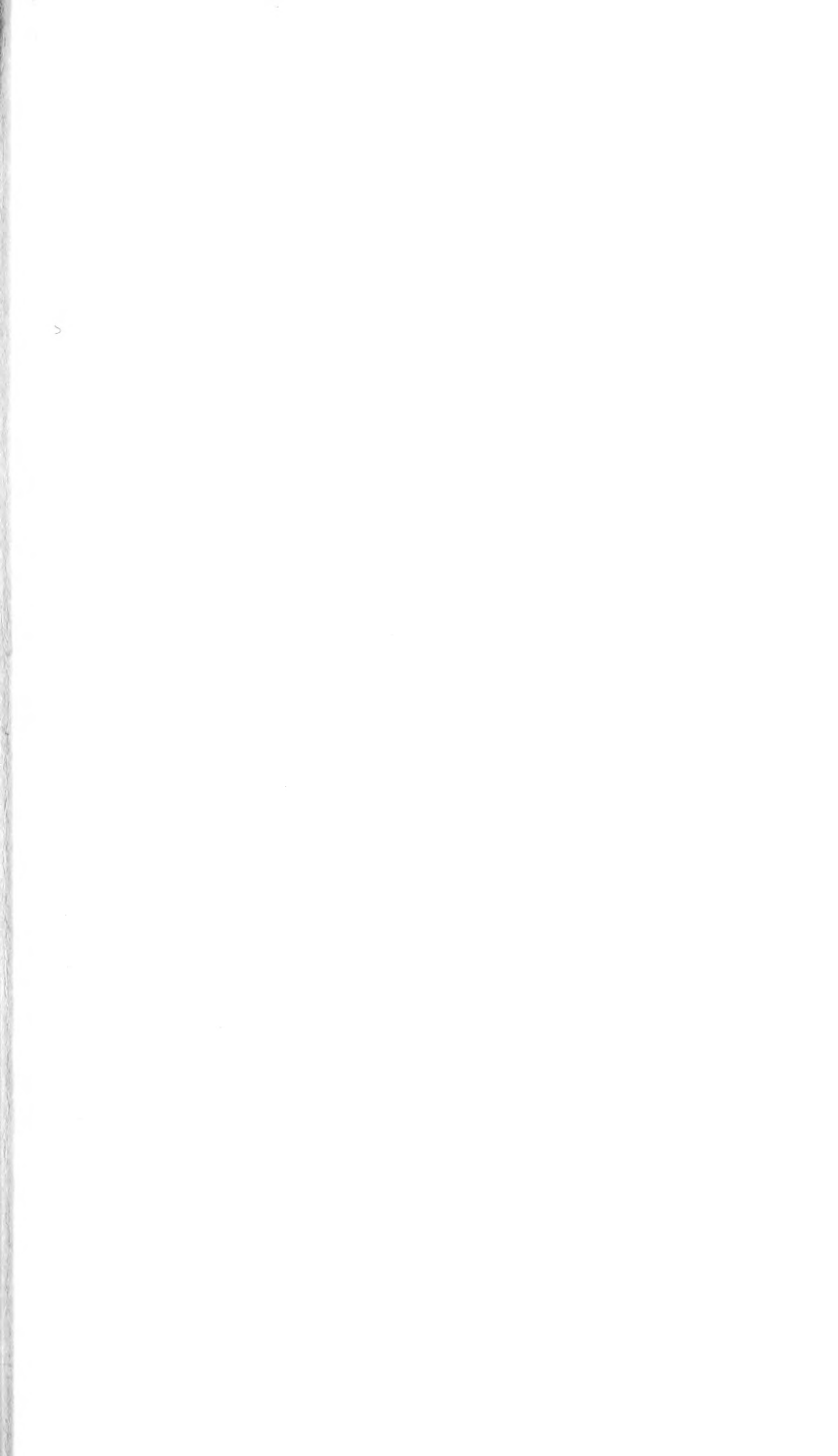
Again, how it *makes a man live close to Christ*! If I am to come to Christ as a sinner every day, and I must do so, for the Word saith, "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him;" if every day I am to come to Christ as a sinner, why then, how paltry all my doings look! what utter contempt it casts upon all my fine virtues, my preachings, my prayings, and all that comes of my flesh! and though it leads me to seek after purity and holiness, yet it teaches me to live on Christ and not on them, and so it keeps me at the fountain head.

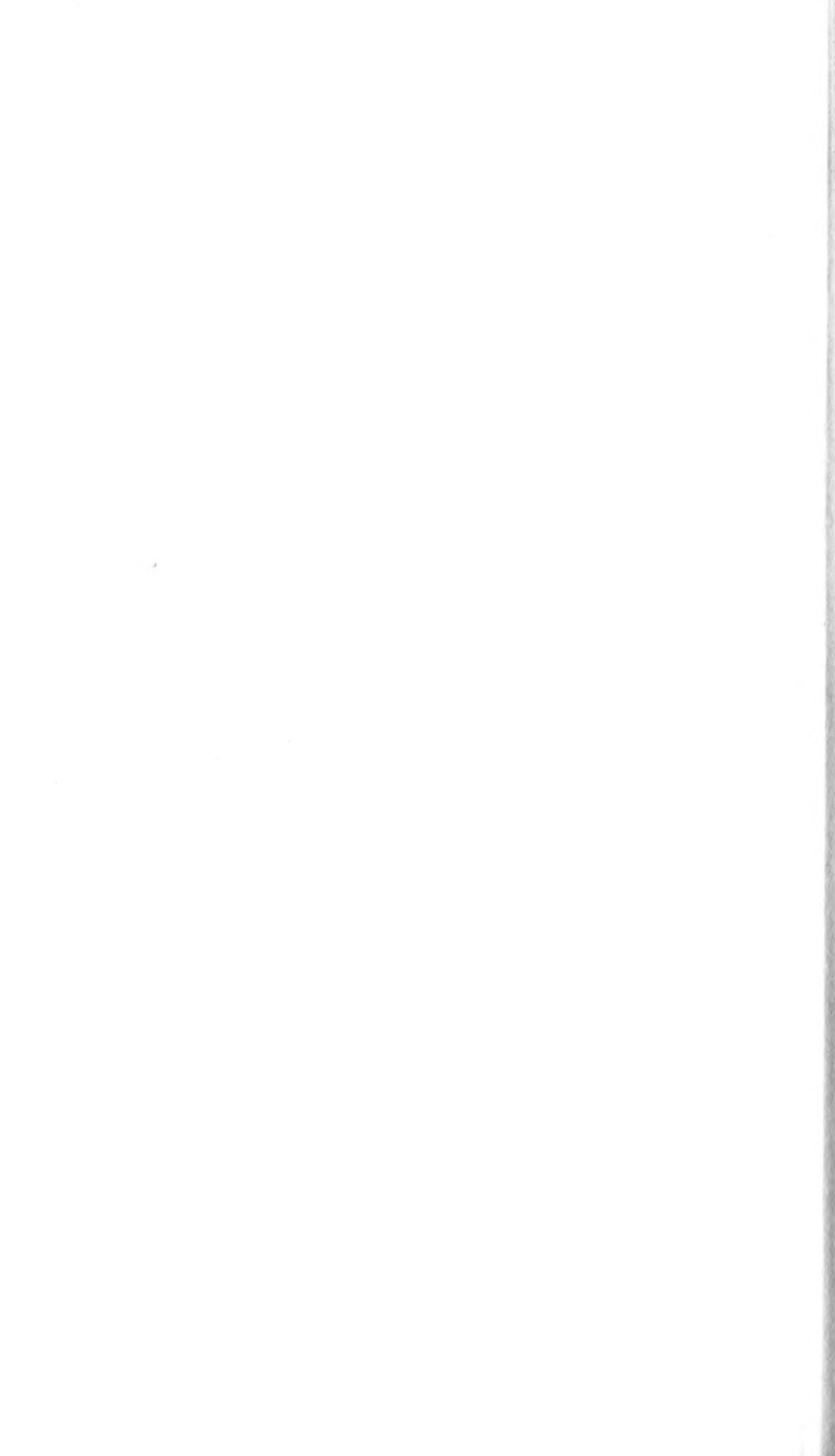
My time flies, and I must leave the last head, just to add, sinner, whoever thou mayst be, God now commands thee to believe in Jesus Christ. This is his commandment: he does not command thee to feel anything, or be anything, to prepare thyself for this. Now, art thou willing to incur the great guilt of making God a liar? Surely thou wilt shrink from that: then dare to believe. Thou canst not say, "I have no right:" you have a perfect right to do what God tells you to do. You cannot tell me you are not fit; there is no fitness wanted, the command is given and it is yours to obey, not to dispute. You cannot say it does not come to you—it is preached to every creature under heaven; and now soul, it is so pleasant a thing to trust the Lord Jesus Christ that I would fain persuade myself thou needest no persuading. It is so delightful a thing to accept a perfect salvation, to be saved by precious blood, and to be married to so bright a Saviour, that I would fain hope the Holy Spirit has led thee to cry, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

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